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Music as *Sinthome*: Joy Riding with Lacan, Lynch, and Beethoven Beyond Postmodernism

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Music as *Sinthome*: Joy Riding with Lacan, Lynch, and Beethoven Beyond Postmodernism

by

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Dissertation

Presented to the Faculty of the Graduate School of

The University of Texas at Austin

in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements

for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

The University of Texas at Austin

August, 2007

Dedication

To Tammy

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank first and foremost, my loving wife Tammy, who in addition to tolerating years of being married to a graduate student, served as the sounding board for many of my best ideas and gave me space to write. I am completely unable to stress how invaluable she has been to this long process. I dedicate this to her. Also, loving thanks to my two children Bella and Xander, your smiling faces made it all worthwhile.

I am incredibly lucky to have an advisor like Jim Buhler who has been instrumental in advancing my thought and helping me work through many of the issues of the dissertation. His patience, wisdom, detailed editing, and willingness to meet at the drop of a hat have immensely improved my work. Thanks also to my committee for their encouraging and thoughtful remarks that helped me piece together an overall direction for my argument and made the final version much more readable.

Thank you to my mother, Eva Willet, father, Gene Willet, Grandmother Helen Willet, and the rest of my family who have always had tremendous faith in me and encouraged me to pursue my goals; your support was felt from

thousands of miles away. Thanks to all my friends and colleagues (past and present) at the Umlauf Sculpture Garden and Museum whose patients with me through this process are surpassed only by their kindness. Thanks to Sarah for the numerous Lacan reading sessions that were at times productive, at times psychotic, but always fun and invaluable to this project. Cheers to Lee who helped me recharge when I would get run down. Warm thanks to Ryan and Jamie who have been pillars of support for both me, and my family. Thanks to all the great Baristas at SBC Tech Ridge for keeping me properly caffeinated and providing a friendly place to write. And finally, special thanks to all my friends and family who are no doubt tied of the excuse, "sorry, I have to write;" I look forward to the good times ahead.

Music as *Sinthome*: Joy Riding with Lacan, Lynch, and Beethoven Beyond Postmodernism

Publication No._____

Eugene Kenneth Willet, Ph. D.
The University of Texas at Austin, 2007

Supervisor: James M. Buhler

The films of David Lynch are full of ambiguities that derive from his habitual distortion of time, inversion of characters, and creation of ironic, dreamlike worlds that are mired in crisis. While these ambiguities have been explored from numerous angles, scholars have only recently begun to closely examine music's role in Lynch's cinematic imagination. This dissertation explores the relationship between music and fantasy through the lens of Lacanian psychoanalysis where fantasy plays a crucial role in helping psychoanalytical subjects work through their psychical crises. In particular, I look at *Blue Velvet* (1986), *Lost Highway* (1996), and *Mulholland Drive* (2001), showing how Lynch employs music to manage and, in the case of *Mulholland Drive*, move beyond the particular crises of *jouissance* experienced by the characters—and also the viewers.

Before engaging in my analysis of Lynch's film music, however, I begin with an extended discussion of what Kevin Korsyn describes as the current crisis of music scholarship, examining how this crisis manifests itself in recent "postmodern" interpretations of Beethoven's Ninth Symphony. Few works are invested with as much cultural capital as this one and arguably the discourse around it exhibits the crisis more acutely than any other. Korsyn restricts his analysis to the fields of musicology and music theory, but I approach the crisis of music scholarship obliquely, through my Lacanian reading of Lynch's film music.

This dissertation, then, has two goals. On one hand it attempts to examine music's role in Lynch's films, and on the other, it explores how Lynch's use of music might aid us in navigating and moving beyond the institutional crises of music scholarship. This Lynchian solution to our crisis provides a glimpse of what might lie beyond postmodernism, a new philosophical movement some are calling the "New Sincerity." This term covers several loosely related cultural or philosophical movements that have followed in the wake of postmodernism, the most notable being what Raoul Eshelman and Judith Butler refer to as "performatism." Finally, I return to Beethoven's Ninth to offer a second, performative reading, demonstrating how Lynch's use of music can be translated into current musical discourse.

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Half the film is picture, the other half is sound. They've got to work together. . . each piece that ends up in the film supports the scene and makes the whole greater than the sum of the parts.
– David Lynch[1]

Lately I feel films are more and more like music…Music deals with abstractions and, like film, it involves time. It has many different movements, it has much contrast. And through music you learn that, in order to get a particular beautiful feeling, you have to have started far back, arranging certain things in a certain way. You can't just cut to it.
– David Lynch[2]

ISSUES OF MUSIC IN THE FILMS OF DAVID LYNCH

Anyone who has seen a David Lynch film has, almost certainly, been taken by a certain image they "cannot get over."[3] Excessive images, such as the vomiting sculptured faces in Lynch's first film *Six Men Getting Sick* (1967)[4]; the grotesque, non-human infant of Henry (Jack Nance) and his girlfriend in Lynch's first independent, full-length feature *Eraserhead* (1977); the repulsive, heavily disfigured body of John Merrick (John Hurt) in Lynch's first Hollywood

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[1] *The City of Absurdity,* "*Lost Highway* Soundtrack"; available at http://www.thecityofabsurdity.com/losthighway/lhsound.html; accessed 21 April 2007.

[2] Mark Kermode, "Wierdo," *Q Magazine,* September 1997, posted on *The City of Absurdity,* "*Lost Highway* Interviews and Articles," available at http://www.thecityofabsurdity.com/losthighway/intlhqmag.html; accessed 21 April 2007.

[3] Michel Chion, *David Lynch,* trans., Robert Julian, (London: British Film Institute, 1995), 3.

[4] *Six Men Getting Sick* is a short, one-minute film completed by Lynch while studying painting at the Philadelphia Academy of Fine Arts. The film is continuously looped and projected onto a three-dimensional, sculptured screen.

produced film *The Elephant Man* (1980); the sadistic rape of Dorothy (Isabella Rossellini) by Frank Booth (Dennis Hopper) in Lynch's cult classic *Blue Velvet* (1986); and the plastic-wrapped, decomposing body of Laura Palmer (Sheryl Lee) in Lynch's television series *Twin Peaks* (1990-1991), not only disturb viewers, but defy meaning and stretch the limits of interpretation. Additionally, Lynch's habitual distortion of time, inversion of characters, and complex, non-linear narrative structures in films like *Lost Highway* (1997) and *Mulholland Drive* (2001) challenge a viewer's fundamental ability to follow the plot.

Adding to the confusion is Lynch's incessant refusal to explain his films, choosing instead to leave interpretation open to the audience. When once asked what *Wild at Heart* (1990) was about, Lynch responded, "Well, it's about one hour and forty-five minutes."[5] This refusal to interpret his films has left the door wide open for scholars to propose their own interpretations. Indeed, scholarship of Lynch's film has virtually exploded in recent years with the release of no fewer than eight new or updated books since 2000, not to mention the dozens of articles that have appeared in academic journals, websites, and magazines over that same period.

The obscure symbolism of his films seems to demand to be deciphered as a secret code, but his films are unusually resistant to such hermeneutic decoding. Rather than clarifying, interpretation seems only to lay bare the uncertainty of his films "meaning." This ambiguity has naturally lead to a variety of

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[5] Chris Rodley, ed., *Lynch on Lynch,* (London: Farber and Farber, 1997), 54.

contrasting—even contradictory—readings including postmodern,[6] New Age,[7] conservative,[8] feminist,[9] transcendentalist,[10] psychoanalytical,[11] and post-postmodern.[12] Though these readings may differ significantly in their analysis of Lynch's films, they all agree that Lynch has something important to say. In particular, Lynch's very ambiguity seems to endow his works with a unique, distinct, and even revelatory perspective on ourselves and the world in which we live, even if that perspective is "weird", "impossible," "strange," "perverse," "nightmarish," or "ridiculous"—to name just a few of the critical responses.[13]

Although these films have been explored from numerous angles, scholars have, often, paid only passing attention to Lynch's use of music. This neglect is

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[6] For a postmodern reading see James Naremore, *More Than Night,* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1998).

[7] An exemplary New Age reading is Martha P. Nochimson, *The Passion of David Lynch*, (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1997).

[8] An excellent reading of Lynch as a Regane-sque conservative is Jeff Johnson, *Pervert in the Pulpit: Morality in the Works of David Lynch,* (Jefferson, North Carolina, and London: McFarland & Company, Inc., Publishers, 2004).

[9] For a feminist reading see Kelly McDowell, "Unleashing the Feminine Unconscious: Female Oedipal Desires and Lesbian Sadomasochism *Mulholland Dr*.," *The Journal of Popular Culture* 38, no. 6 (2005): 1037-49.

[10] For a reading of transcendental irony in Lynch see Eric G. Wilson, *The Strange World of David Lynch: Transcendental Irony from Eraserhead to Mulholland Dr.,* (New York: Continuum, 2007).

[11] The consummate Lacanian reading is Slavoj Žižek, *The Art of the Ridiculous Sublime: On David Lynch's Lost Highway,* Walter Chapin Simpson Center for the Humanities Short Studies, (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2002), 28-31; and also, Todd McGowan, *The Impossible David Lynch,* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007).

[12] For an argument of Lynch's work as moving beyond postmodernism see Nicholas Rombes, "*Blue Velvet* Underground: David Lynch's Post-Punk Poetics," in *The Cinema of David Lynch: American dreams, Nightmare Visions,* ed. Erica Sheen and Annette Davison, Directors' Cuts Series, (New York: Wallflower Press, 2004), 61-76.

[13] These descriptions can be found in some of the more recent titles of books on Lynch's films.

surprising given Lynch's emphasis on sound and music in the opening quotes of this chapter. Typical discussions of Lynch's use of music point out how it supports the image (delegating music its usual, secondary role of support), how Lynch's collaboration with composers and sound designers is uncommon in the Hollywood system, or reveal where Lynch got the idea to use a particular piece of music. These discussions provide important basic information but offer little insight into what work music does in Lynch's films. John Richardson's "*Laura* and *Twin Peaks*: Postmodern Parody and the Musical Reconstruction of the Absent Femme Fatale" is an exception; he draws parallels with Otto Preminger's noir classic, *Laura*, which uses music and sound to fill in for the missing title character.[14] Annette Davison's "'Up in Flames': Love, Control and Collaboration in the Soundtrack to *Wild at Heart*" is also unusual in that she not only considers the musical and sonic codes of the film, but explores the "concept of 'music' as a code in itself."[15] These two articles are important first steps in uncovering the crucial role music plays in Lynch's films. Given the place of music in Lynch's films, it is surprising that so few scholars have integrated music and sound into their interpretations of these films. Turning an ear toward music can only help us better understand the workings of Lynch's cinematic imagination. This dissertation is another step in that direction.

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[14] John Richardson, "*Laura* and *Twin Peaks*: Postmodern Parody and the Musical Reconstruction of the Absent Femme Fatale," in *The Cinema of David Lynch: American dreams, Nightmare Visions,* ed. Erica Sheen and Annette Davison, Directors' Cuts Series, (New York: Wallflower Press, 2004), 77-92.

[15] Annette Davison, "'Up in Flames': Love, Control and Collaboration in the Soundtrack to *Wild at Heart,*" in *The Cinema of David Lynch: American dreams, Nightmare Visions,* ed. Erica Sheen and Annette Davison, Directors' Cuts Series, (New York: Wallflower Press, 2004), 119-35.

LYNCH AND MUSICAL SCHOLARSHIP

Just as a musical examination can provide a better understanding of Lynch's films, I also believe that Lynch has something to offer our field. Besides an analysis and discussion of Lynch's use of music in his films, my dissertation has a second aim, one that relates his approach to music in his films to what I see as a fundamental crisis in music scholarship today. Although the introduction of postmodern techniques to music criticism has created countless new ways to explore meaning in music, the abundance of meaning that it allows has understandably led to the charge it renders music meaningless. In other words, now that music can potentially mean anything, depending less on the "music itself" than on the postmodern ideology that determines the meaning, music runs the risk of meaning nothing. In the hopes of saving musical meaning from this all or nothing dichotomy, many music scholars have attempted to force a consensus that would restrict meaning to certain, institutionally approved modes of inquiry. What is lost in consensus, are the insights of scholarship that does not conform.

These are the concerns of Kevin Korsyn's *Decentering Music: A Critique of Contemporary Musical Research*, which explores this "crisis" in contemporary music scholarship.[16] Korsyn restricts his analysis to the fields of musicology and music theory. But it is often the case that it is easier to see in another domain solutions to our own problems. For this reason, I approach the crisis obliquely, through a Lacanian reading of music in three films of David Lynch. The point

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[16] Kevin Korsyn, *Decentering Music: A critique of Contemporary Musical Research,* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003).

here, then, is not only to interpret these films through their music but to explore what Lynch's treatment of music in his films might teach us about managing and even working through the crisis of musical scholarship.

In particular I look at three of Lynch's Neo-Noir films—*Blue Velvet* (1986), *Lost Highway* (1996), and *Mulholland Drive* (2001). These three films have been chosen because the main characters in each film experience a crisis (the same might be said about viewers of his films). But it is Lynch's use of music that often provides a way for the character to deal with and, in some cases, move beyond it. I propose that Lynch's handling of music offers an analysis of and potential solutions to the crises Korsyn argues have encumbered music scholarship. This dissertation, then, has two goals. On one hand it attempts to examine music's role in Lynch's films, and on the other, it translates what Lynch teaches us about music back into music scholarship, suggesting ways we might move beyond the current crisis in music discourse.

This dissertation evolved out of a paper I wrote on *Lost Highway* for an art criticism course. In that short paper, I demonstrated how Lynch's employment of music paralleled and reinforced Slavoj Žižek's Lacanian reading of the film as a split between reality and fantasy revealing how the reality portion of the film is nearly devoid of music, while the fantasy half of the film is filled with music.[17] Extending this reading of *Lost Highway*, I began to explore the relationship between music and fantasy in Lynch's other films discovering that it was not simply restricted to *Lost Highway*, but was an association that Lynch frequently

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[17] Žižek, *The Art of the Ridiculous Sublime,* 41.

used. This relationship between music and fantasy has evolved throughout Lynch's career and has grown to assume an extremely important place in his aesthetic. Because fantasy also plays a central role in Lacanian psychoanalysis, I reasoned that a Lacanian reading of Lynch's use of music might provide significant insight into the workings of Lynchian fantasy. Moreover, if the primary function of psychoanalysis is to help subjects work through their crises, it would seem that examining the current musical crisis through the lens of Lacanian psychoanalysis (via Lynch's film music) might aid us in navigating and moving beyond the institutional crises of music scholarship.

INTRODUCTION TO LACAN: REAL, SYMBOLIC, IMAGINARY (RSI)

Since Lacan's psychoanalytical theory is crucial to my analysis and interpretation of both Lynch's films and the crises of music scholarship, it is important that we have a grasp of some of the theory's basic concepts. Lacan's theory is well known for being an "infuriatingly obscure" and often "totally incomprehensible 'psychotic' system" of language and algebra.[18] My short introduction to Lacan cannot hope to cover every aspect of this complex language, rather, I concentrate on those aspects of his theory that bear on the basic concepts I will draw on for my analyses in the remainder of the dissertation.

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[18] Dylan Evans, *An Introductory Dictionary of Lacanian Psychoanalysis,* (New York: Brunner-Routledge, 1996), ix.

The whole of Lacan's work has been described as a "return to Freud,"[19] and readers new to Lacan will undoubtedly recognize the influence. Lacanian psychoanalysis identifies three different orders of existence: Real, Symbolic, and Imaginary (RSI). The Lacanian Imaginary is the order of images and imaginary relations, the foremost Imaginary object being what Freud called the Ego. The Lacanian Symbolic is the order of language and discourse, of the Law, and of society in general, which Lacan alternately refers to as the Big Other, similar to what Freud called the Superego. The Lacanian Real is an order of existence before thinking, before language. The Real is, for example, an infant before it comes under the sway of the Symbolic order, before it is instructed in the ways of the world. This, of course, is similar to what Freud called the Id. Though drawing on Freud's concepts, Lacan also extends and transforms them. Thus, the relations between Ego, Superego, and Id in Freud's theory are quite different in Lacan's.

In "normal" reality Lacan envisioned the orders as knotted together into a formation known as a Borromean knot (see Figure 1.1). The Borromean knot (so called because it is found on the coat of arms of the Borromeo family) consists of three separate rings with three zones of intersection and a single central zone where all three rings overlap. Looking closely at the points of intersection reveals that none of the rings are knotted directly to each other, but only obtain the consistency of the knot through the intervention of the third ring. In other words, the group of three rings are linked despite the fact that no two are

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[19] Ibid., 67-68.

directly connected. The three rings of the knot interact and balance each other so that if any one ring is cut, all three become separated.

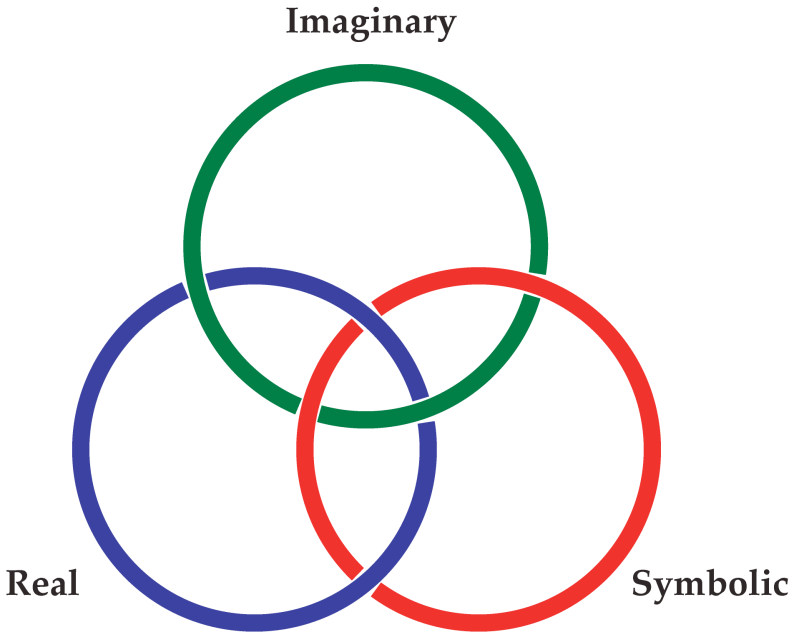

Figure 1.1: The Borromean knot representing Lacan's three orders of existence: Real, Symbolic, and Imaginary.

The subject's[20] first exposure to the Symbolic occurs with the child/Mother relationship. Lacan explains that in the beginning of the child/Mother relationship, a child is unable to communicate with its Mother; its only means of communication is crying. The child, in order to communicate what its needs are, must submit to language; it must enter a system (the Symbolic) that is not its own in order to relay its desires to the Mother. When the

[20] The term "subject" is never mentioned by Freud, thus, making it a distinctive feature in Lacan's work. I employ the term as it was used in Lacan's early work to mean a human being. See, Evans, *An Introductory Dictionary*, 195.

child does this, it gives up its natural state of being and submits itself to the Mother. It is the child's submission to the Mother that led Lacan to formulate his concept of alienation: the child is alienated from itself. By submitting to the Mother, the child is alienated from its natural state of being but nevertheless gains something: he or she becomes one of language's subjects, a subject "of language" or "in language." While the child/Mother relationship is fundamental to Lacan's work, it is important to recognize that the child's Mother is only the first of many mOthers the subject will encounter throughout his or her relationship with the Symbolic order.[21]

This submission of the child to the mOther is not something that automatically occurs, but is instead, presented to the child as a kind of "forced choice". Lacan's classic example of this "choice" is the mugger's threat: your money or your life! As soon as you hear those words, it is clear what you must choose. Should you try to hold on to your money your mugger will surely take your life, and then, will undoubtedly relieve you of your money. In Lacan's concept of alienation, then, the child can be understood to "choose" to submit to the mOther—to language, to the Symbolic—to agree to express his or her needs through the distorting medium of language, and to allow him or herself to be represented by words.[22]

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[21] Bruce Fink, *The Lacanian Subject: Between Language and Jouissance,* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1995), 5-7 and 49-51. I am deeply indebted to Fink's sound pedagogical approach to Lacanian psychoanalysis. Much of the terminology in this chapter is borrowed from him. For example, the term "mOther" to explain both the child's initial alienation involving its Mother and the subject's continual relation with the Other. His book, *The Lacanian Subject* is a necessary read for any interested in Lacan's work.

[22] Ibid., 51.

The child, having submitted to language, is assigned a place in the Symbolic, a place that is designated for him or her alone, but as yet, does not mean or "hold" anything. J.-A. Miller suggests that this initial subject is essentially equivalent to an empty set {∅}, a set that has no elements, a symbol that transforms nothingness into something by marking it. For Lacan, it is this signifier that founds the subject; it is what gives existence to the subject.[23] Should the child choose however not to submit to language, the ability to communicate with the mOther and the place within the Symbolic must be surrendered. Such a refusal to submit to language, Lacan says, leads to psychosis.

In Lacan's example of alienation, the child sees itself as directly connected to the mOther, the mOther being simply an extension of the child. This child/Mother unity, however, is obviously only a perception on the part of the child and the child eventually recognizes (through the mOther's absence) that this unity does not exist. Hence, the child becomes aware of the mOther's desire for something else beyond the child. Psychoanalysis refers to this "something else" for which the mOther desires as the phallus, an object that comes to represent, for the child, the object of the mOther's desire. Lacan uses the matheme Φ to represent the phallus.[24] The child sees the phallic object *a*s

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[23] The signifier as the subject's placeholder within the symbolic order is not unrelated to the subject's proper name. Before birth, this name has absolutely nothing to do with the subject; it is as foreign to him or her as any other signifier, but in time this signifier will go to the root of his or her being. Ibid., 52-53.

[24] The phallus for Lacan is not the same thing as the penis, but rather focuses on the notion of lack. It is a signifier that comes to represent the object of desire for the child. The child, then, lacks the phallus (since the mOther desires outside the child) and also lacks the knowledge of what it is that the mOther desires. See Darian Leader and Judy Groves, *Introducing Lacan,* Introducing Series, ed. Richard Appignanesi, (New York: Totem Books, 1996), 75-77 and 88-96.

prohibiting unity with the mOther, that is, as prohibiting the seeking of enjoyment with the mOther.

Lacan noticed that in the traditional nuclear family it is the Father whom the child typically sees as interposing himself between it and the Mother, and Lacan referred to this moment in the child's development as instating the Name-of-the-Father: the restricting, forbidding force also known as the Law. Instating the Name-of-the-Father causes the child to realize its own existence outside of the mOther; the child no longer sees the mOther as an extension of itself. The Name-of-the-Father creates a gap between the mOther and the child and the child is "separated" from the mOther[25].

In actuality, however, the Name-of-the-Father acts as a kind of protective shield, a defense for the child against the mOther's desire: instating the Father's "No" saves the child from having to confront the inherent impossibility of the child/mOther unity by providing an external excuse. In other words, the child believes that the child/mOther unity would be possible if it were not for the Father. The child is thus saved from the overwhelming force of the mOther's desire. Additionally, the mOther's desire for something else creates a desire within the child to be that which the mOther desires: to be the phallus. It is here that we see the definition of Lacan's statement that the mOther's desire functions as the cause of the subject's desire.[26] The subject is no longer an empty signifier but has become a desiring subject.

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[25] Fink, *The Lacanian Subject,* 55-58.

[26] Ibid.

The processes of alienation and separation, however, are not entirely smooth and produce a residue. This residue is the Lacanian object *a*: a certain remainder the child takes with him or her.[27] This remainder acts for the child as a reminder of the "perfect" unity the child had with the mOther. By holding onto that rem(a)inder and infusing it with fantasy, the child, though expelled from the mOther, can sustain the illusion of wholeness and can regain a "sense of being" having access once again to enjoyment.[28]

THE REAL NATURE OF OBJECT *A*

Lacanian psychoanalysis associates object *a* with the Real, the order of existence before language and thinking. For example, the infant is theorized as existing in the Real before alienation, that is, before it comes under the sway of the Symbolic order. The Symbolic overwrites the Real and in the process, creates "reality," that which can be thought and talked about through language. What cannot be said in language is not part of Symbolic reality. In reality, the Real therefore does not exist, since it precedes language; Lacan's term for it is that it

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[27] The "*a*" refers to its status as little "other", other being "*autre*" in French. Lacan refers to object a as *petit objet a*—as opposed to "A" representing the big Other in Lacanian algebra. In some English translations, Lacan's algebra is translated so that "A" and "a" (Autre and *petit objet a*) becomes "O" and "o" (Big Other and little other), and see Slavoj Žižek, *The Sublime Object of Ideology,* (New York: Verso, 1989). This dissertation leaves Lacan's algebra untranslated.

[28] Lacan makes a distinction between the sexes at this point. Both men and women experience the process of alienation and separation, but each develops a different kind of relationship with the Symbolic. In this way, from a Lacanian psychoanalytical perspective, masculine and feminine structures have nothing to do with the biological/genetic make-up of a subject, but are determined by the way the subject is split from the Symbolic. See Fink, *The Lacanian Subject,* 105-13.

"ex-sists": to the extent that it exists, it exists outside of or apart from our reality. Insofar as we name and talk about the Real, we draw it into language and thereby give a kind of existence to that which, in its very concept, has only ex-sistence.[29]

The Real, however, should not be only understood as merely before language, before the Symbolic, but also as "that which has not yet been symbolized, remains to be symbolized, or even resists symbolization."[30] The Real may exist "alongside" and despite a subject's considerable linguistic capabilities. We might think of the Real as everything that has yet to be symbolized. Language no doubt never completely transforms the Real, never drains all of the Real into the Symbolic order. A "residuum" is always left. There is always a residue to symbolization, a remainder of alienation, a remnant of the Real that persists and ex-sists after or despite symbolization and interrupts the smooth functioning of the Symbolic (the Other).[31] This eruption of the Real is one of the ways Lacan characterizes object *a*.[32]

One of Žižek's clearest examples of object *a* as a little piece of the Real can be found in several of Alfred Hitchcock's films involving the famous "MacGuffins." The MacGuffin is a pure pretext whose sole role is to set the story in motion but which is in itself "nothing at all." The only significance of the

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[29] Fink, *The Lacanian Subject,* 25.

[30] Ibid., 26-27.

[31] Ibid., 83.

[32] Lacan also referred to this remainder as the symptom and the fact that there is always a residue to symbolization attests to why Lacan theorized the need to go beyond the talking cure in psychoanalysis and treat the Real kernel of the symptom.

MacGuffin lies in the fact that it has some significance for the characters and seems of vital importance to them. Examples in Hitchcock's films include Harry's body in *The Trouble With Harry,* the formulas of the aircraft engines in *The Thirty-Nine Steps,* the coded melody in *The Lady Vanishes,* and the uranium bottles in *Notorious*. The MacGuffin is the purest case of the Lacanian object *a*: an object that ex-sists, the embodiment of a lack, an eruption of the Real into the Symbolic, a rem(a)inder that the subject infuses with fantasy to once again have access to enjoyment.[33] Lacan referred to this enjoyment obtained from object *a* as *jouissance*.

JOUISSANCE AND BEYOND PLEASURE

The French word *jouissance* means enjoyment, but it has a sexual connotation (orgasm) lacking in the English word "enjoyment", and is therefore usually left untranslated in English editions of Lacan.[34] This is in fact helpful, because *jouissance* as Lacan conceives it is not only satisfaction or enjoyment in the normal sense, but also indicates a kind of pleasure in pain or painful pleasure. In Freudian terms, it corresponds to the transgression of the pleasure principle that actually functions to limit enjoyment. The subject, while using the pleasure principle to maintain a certain distance from what Freud calls *das Ding,* at the same time, constantly attempts to transgress the prohibitions imposed on his or her enjoyment, to go "beyond the pleasure principle." "The result of

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[33] Žižek, *The Sublime Object,* 163 and 182.

[34] Evans, *An Introductory Dictionary,* 91.

transgressing the pleasure principle, however, is not more pleasure, but pain, since there is only a certain amount of pleasure that the subject can bear."[35] The term *jouissance,* then, connotes the dual nature of the subject's symptom and the paradox of satisfaction that the subject derives from his or her suffering, or to put it another way, the suffering that he or she derives from their own satisfaction.

For Lacan, a kind of Real *jouissance* exits before alienation, before the institution of the Symbolic order (J_1), but this *jouissance* is cancelled out by alienation, forbidden through separation and the instating of the Name-of-the-Father. The subject however, is able to acquire some portion of *jouissance* through fantasy and object *a*—a *jouissance* after separation (J_2): ($J_1 \rightarrow$Symbolic$\rightarrow J_2$). According to Fink:

> This second-order *jouissance* takes the place of the former "wholeness" or "completeness," and fantasy—which stages this second-order *jouissance*—takes the subject beyond his or her nothingness…and supplies a sense of being.[36]

It is, thus, only through the fantasies associated with the object *a* that the subject can establish what Lacan refers to as "being."

In Seminar XXIII, *Le Sinthome,* Lacan identifies three different modes or forms of *jouissance*: phallic *jouissance* (JΦ), the *jouissance* of the Other (JA), and joui-sens.[37] Phallic *jouissance* is the *jouissance* associated with the Name-of-the-

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[35] Ibid., 92.

[36] Fink, *The Lacanian Subject,* 60-61.

[37] Véronique Voruz, "Acephalic Litter as a Phallic Letter," in *Re-Inventing the Symptom: Essays on the Final Lacan,* ed. Luke Thurston, Contemporary Theory Series, ed., Frances Restuccia, (New York: Other Press, 2002), 128-29. This third term is spelled differently by different authors; e.g., joui-sens, jouis-sens, and *jouis-sens*. It may or may not be italicized. This dissertation uses the

Father (the phallus)—the Father who himself enjoys but forbids enjoyment through his prohibitive "No".[38] The *jouissance* of the Other is precisely that in which the Other finds enjoyment, this is first and foremost the phallus, the object that the child imagines fulfilling the mOther's desires. As for *jouis-sens*, Lacan is here making a play on words: it sounds like the word *jouissance* in French, but the hyphenation and altered spelling also suggest enjoyment-in-sense or enjoyment-in-meaning. For Lacan, this is the *jouissance* derived from interpreting the ambiguity of the Other's desire, from answering the question (through fantasy): "what does the Other want?"

The three modes of *jouissance* are distinct yet continually interact with each other. For example, the question of the Other's desire is essentially the question of the *jouissance* of the Other: What is it that provides enjoyment for the Other? In the child/mOther relationship the child constructs the fantasy of the phallus as the object that the mOther desires. Thus, the construction of phallic *jouissance* provides the child with *jouis-sens*, an enjoyment-in-meaning, enjoyment in answering the question of the *jouissance* of the Other. Phallic *jouissance* is what the child creates to answer the question of how the mOther enjoys. We can see how this *jouis-sens* is delusional in that the phallus functions as the external third terms that allows the child to tie up the inconsistency of its own belief (the fact that the mOther/child unity is inherently impossible). By

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term *jouis-sens* in italics following Dominiek Hoens and Ed Pluth, "The *sinthome*: A New Way of Writing an Old Problem?" in *Re-Inventing the Symptom: Essays on the Final Lacan,* ed., Luke Thurston, Contemporary Theory Series, ed., Frances Restuccia, (New York: Other Press, 2002).

[38] We will see that phallic *jouissance* is also the enjoyment the subject derives from alienation and the guaranteeing that such enjoyment exists.

creating the phallus, the child saves itself from having to confront that the mOther/child unity is inherently impossible. Therefore, the *jouis-sens* of the phallus is based on ideological fantasy, and the child is in reality, deluding itself, believing that the mOther/child unity would in fact be possible *if it were not for the phallus.* We will see in Chapter Five that this mode of enjoyment takes on a radical new form as the subject comes to terms with the nonexistence of the Other.

Lacan, in another version of the Borromean knot (see Figure 1.2), explores these different modalities and their relation to RSI where he places phallic *jouissance* at the overlapping of R and S; the *jouissance* of the Other at the overlapping of R and I; and *jouis-sens* at the overlapping of S and I. Also visible in Figure 1.2, is that object *a* lies at the heart of the Borromean knot. Object *a,* thus, partakes of each of the three orders, and Lacan even describes it as being "wedged" between RSI as the very principle of their knotting. Additionally, Lacan stresses that the three different modes of *jouissance* are "plugged into" object *a*. However, far from implying a diffusion of *jouissance* across the three registers, object *a* instead demonstrates how each register intervenes to interrupt, intrude upon, "de-complete," or simply limit the *jouissance* created in the overlapping of the other two. It thus, institutes a break or breathing space with what would otherwise be a continuity of *jouissance,* and thus, helps to differentiate the separate modes of *jouissance* operating in its other zones.[39]

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[39] Philip Dravers, "Joyce & the *Sinthome*: Aiming at the Fourth Term of the Knot," *Psychoanalytical Notebooks* Issue 13 "Lacan with Joyce," (2005): 9-10; available at http://www.londonsociety-nls.org.uk/pdfs/Joyce&sinthome.pdf; accessed 25 October 2006.

Object *a,* thus, not only grants access to each mode of *jouissance,* but at the same time also regulates *jouissance*, providing the subject a breathing space and ensuring that the subject is not overrun with *jouissance*.

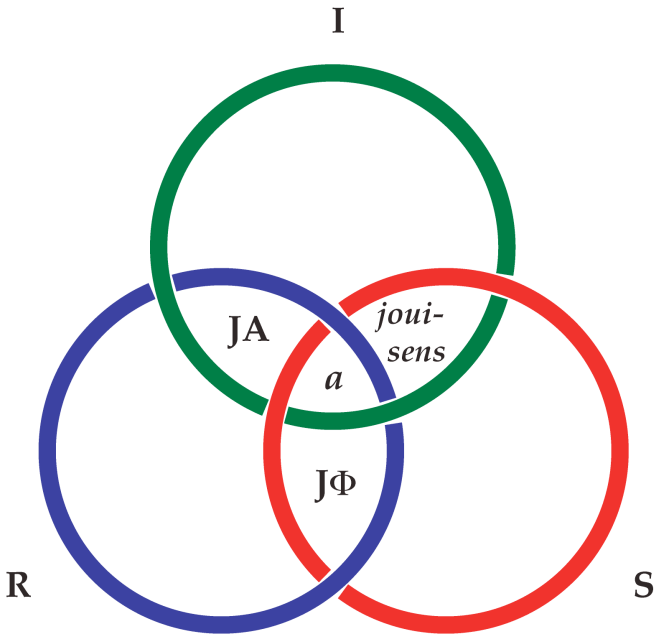

Figure 1.2: RSI, the three modes of *jouissance,* and object *a* mapped onto the Borromean knot.

CHAPTER SUMMARIES

Each of the chapters that follow will examine facets of Lacan's theory in order to illuminate the relationship between the Lacanian triad of RSI, music's role in Lynch's films, and Korsyn's crisis of music discourse. I begin in Chapter Two with an extended discussion of Korsyn's crisis in music scholarship. Although Korsyn provides a basic framework by which we can understand the crisis, my analysis fine-tunes and adds to his account, by examining how the

crisis manifests itself in recent interpretations of Beethoven's Ninth Symphony. This is fitting, because, as we will see, the Ninth Symphony has been one of the most contested objects of contemporary musical scholarship. Few works are invested with as much cultural capital as this one and arguably the discourse around it exhibits the crisis more acutely than any other.

In Chapter Three, I turn to the role of music in Lynch's films. I begin this chapter with a discussion of Stanley Kubrick's *A Clockwork Orange* and its infamous appropriation of Beethoven's Ninth Symphony to demonstrate how the Ninth comes to occupy the position of the Lacanian object *a,* providing access to *jouissance*. I then turn to an analysis of Lynch's *Blue Velvet*, which reveals how American popular music of the 1960 functions as object *a* and assumes the role of the phallus Φ, an object that sticks out and provides a glimpse of phallic *jouissance,* JΦ. This phallic *jouissance* provides a protective fantasy that reassures the subject that somewhere, out there, enjoyment exists, in other words, it ex-sists.

In Chapter Four on *Lost Highway,* I show how Lynch uses music as object *a* to project protective fantasies that stage the "*jouissance* of the Other," JA. Expanding upon Žižek, I show how Lynch uses music to set up the unique narrative structure of *Lost Highway* to successfully "traverse" these fantasies. I argue, however, that this traversal leads to an unknotting of the three Lacanian orders of existence (RSI), creating a psychotic subject—I make a direct connection between this subject and the current crisis in music discourse.

Lacan's way out of this crisis is to create and identify with a *sinthome.* In Chapter Five on *Mulholland Drive,* I show how music as object *a* evolves for

Lynch into a *sinthome*. This evolution in Lynch's use of music, effectively knots back together the three Lacanian orders, and provides a way out of psychosis by constructing a *jouis-sens* without the Other.

In Chapter Six, I suggest how Lynch's technique of identifying with music as the Lacanian *sinthome* might be translated into musical discourse to offer a way out of our crisis. Additionally, this Lynchian/Lacanian solution to our crisis provides a glimpse of what might lie beyond postmodernism, for those not too weary to risk the path, a new philosophical movement some are calling the "New Sincerity." This term covers several loosely related cultural or philosophical movements that have followed in the wake of postmodernism, the most notable being what Raoul Eshelman and Judith Butler, among others, refer to as "performatism."[40] Finally, I return to Beethoven's Ninth to offer a second, performative reading that shows us how to identify with music as *sinthome*.

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[40] Raoul Eshelman, "After Postmodernism: Performatism in Literature," *Anthropeotics 11*, no. 2 (Fall 2005/Winter 2006); available at http://www.anthropoetics.ucla.edu/ap1102/perform05.htm; accessed 21 April 2007. Raoul Eshelman, "Performatism in the Movies (1997-2003)," *Anthropoetics 8,* no. 2 (Fall 2002/Winter 2003); available at http://www.anthropoetics.ucla.edu/ap0802/movies.htm; accessed 21 April 2007. Judith Butler, *Excitable Speech: A Politics of the Performative* (1997).

Chapter Two: Korsyn and the Crises of Musical Discourse

The LORD said, "If as one people speaking the same language they have begun
to do this, then nothing they plan to do will be impossible for them.
Come, let us go down and confuse their language
so they will not understand each other."
--Genesis 11:6-7[41]

And if all others accepted the lie which the Party imposed—if all records
told the same tale—then the lie passed into history and became truth.
"Who controls the past" ran the Party slogan, "controls the future:
who controls the present controls the past."
--George Orwell[42]

Disaffected youth #1: Here comes that cannonball guy. He's cool.
Disaffected youth #2: Are you being sarcastic, dude?
Disaffected youth #1: I don't even know anymore.
--The Simpsons[43]

There is a crisis in contemporary music scholarship—or at least this is the claim Kevin Korsyn puts forth in *Decentering Music: A Critique of Contemporary Musical Research.* Korsyn describes this crisis in terms of the institutional discourse, using "discourse" as Jacques Lacan does, to indicate the intersubjective "social link founded on language."[44] This chapter analyzes the crisis that Korsyn's identifies by examining how it manifests itself in recent scholarly interpretations of Beethoven's Ninth Symphony. Rather than simply being informed by Lacanian theory, as is Korsyn's book, my dissertation is fully

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[41] Genesis 11:6-7 (New International Version)

[42] *George Orwell, "1984"* (New York: Signet, 1992) *32.*

[43] *The Simpsons, Episode: 3F21 "Homerpalooza."*

[44] Korsyn, *Decentering Music*, 5.

committed to the premises of that theory. This allows me to reposition the two faces of Korsyn's crisis, the Tower of Babel and the Ministry of Truth; in addition Lacan helps me identify a third face, an as yet, little discussed aspect of the crisis, which I call "*The Simpsons* Effect." This added term is my attempt to come to grips with a scholarly world that has grown over-ironized; a critical practice that no longer finds the techniques of deconstruction informative; a state that, under the threat of being untimely, I will call "postmodern".

Few would deny the existence of this crisis. Nevertheless, such sympathetic critics as Ruth Solie believe that Korsyn's argument is "about a decade out of date"; that it "might have been challenging, or helpful, or provocative ten years ago, but it doesn't quite seem to be any of those right now." Solie has a point: as Korsyn describes it, this crisis is a topic that has loomed over music scholarship for at least the past decade. Still, whether late on the scene or not, Korsyn's book lucidly summarizes and analyzes this crisis, suggesting that one reason these issues remain relevant is that the crisis has only been pushed aside and swept under the carpet; it has not in any sense been solved. Solie's claim that Korsyn's book has come late on the scene therefore seems more a product of intellectual weariness in once again having to engage a crisis that is fundamentally insoluble, than of thinking the crisis has in any sense disappeared.

Korsyn's contribution to the debate is in offering a framework within which to understand the crisis. This framework has two faces: the "Tower of Babel," which concerns the rapid proliferation of scholarly methods and discourses; and the "Ministry of Truth," which concerns institutional pressures

toward standardized scholarly productivity. The explanatory power of this framework is impressive, yet, as Solie's response suggests, Korsyn does not seem to offer anything more than explanation. As Korsyn himself often recognized, his work participates in and is a product of the very crisis he describes. If Solie seems exasperated, this is perhaps because it is not clear what we are to *do* about the crisis. Korsyn himself seems to offer only a stance that we should talk more, which at best suggests that the crisis of musical discourse can be resolved like the Freudian "symptom"—by way of the so-called "talking cure."[45]

ALL-OR-NOTHING FROM THE TOWER OF BABEL

"We seem stranded in different linguistic universes even when engaging the same music"[46]—this is the crux of the discursive crisis Korsyn calls the Tower of Babel. As evidence of this crisis, he provides two antithetical readings of the same excerpt from *Der Rosenkavalier* by Richard Strauss—one by Wayne Koestenbaum, another by Eugene Narmour. Korsyn remarks that he can "scarcely imagine a greater contrast" than that between Koestenbaum's eloquent prose about bending time and gender and Narmour's strict measure of each note with a stopwatch down to the millisecond.[47] For Korsyn, such sharply divided

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[45] The "talking cure" puts into words, primarily through free association, the previously unspeakable, traumatic experience. Lacan realized, however, that the overcoming of the repressed did not automatically lead to a psychoanalytical cure, in that, several of Freud's patients experienced a return of their symptoms or developed new ones. Lacan, therefore, theorized the need to go beyond the talking cure that had been one of the fundamental psychoanalytical tools since Anna O. first used the term in the earliest days of psychoanalysis.

[46] Korsyn, *Decentering Music,* 10.

[47] Ibid., 14.

reactions typify music discourse's present situation, in which the discussion of music has "split into hostile camps and embattled factions torn by angry debates."[48] It should be no surprise, however, that the reactions of Koestenbaum and Narmour are so disparate given that they approach the music from completely different disciplines: Koestenbaum is, after all, an American poet and professor of English, whereas Narmour is a music theorist, one working from the premises of cognitive science.

But Koestenbaum and Narmour are just the tip of the iceberg. For these two scholars do not actively engage one another; indeed they effectively operate on separate discursive planes, which assures the conflict will likely express itself in no stronger form other than indifference. The disparity between the interpretations of Koestenbaum and Narmour simply expresses, in acute form, the instability of scholarly discourse in general, the discipline's inability to find a consensus on what constitutes a discourse proper to music, and the endemic proliferation of multiple and conflicting interpretations that follows from this lack of consensus.

We can see these forces at work in the debates in the 1990s over the so-called "new musicology." These debates concerned the methodologies, priorities and goals of musical research in general. Music theory specifically contributed to this debate by engaging the new musicology on the topic of analysis.

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[48] Ibid., 15.

Korsyn points to an exchange between Susan McClary and Pieter C. van den Toorn as a particularly angry manifestation of this conflict.[49] The argument between McClary and van den Toorn focused on the moment of recapitulation in the first movement of Beethoven's Ninth Symphony. McClary claims that Beethoven's symphony adds two further dimensions to the inherently strong goal direction of tonality, namely, assaultive pelvic pounding and sexual violence.

> The point of recapitulation in the first movement of the Ninth is one of the most horrifying moments in music, as the carefully prepared cadence is frustrated, damming up energy which finally explodes in the throttling, murderous rage of a rapist incapable of attaining release.[50]

In the revised version of this article that appears in *Feminine Endings,* McClary somewhat softens her reading,[51] but she still considers the recapitulation in the first movement of the Ninth as "one of the most horrifyingly violent episodes in the history of music."[52] Specifically, McClary is referring to measure 301 where the opening motive of the movement returns forte in D major, a striking contrast to the almost inaudible opening in D minor. In measure 314 however, D major gives way again to D minor (see Example 2.1).

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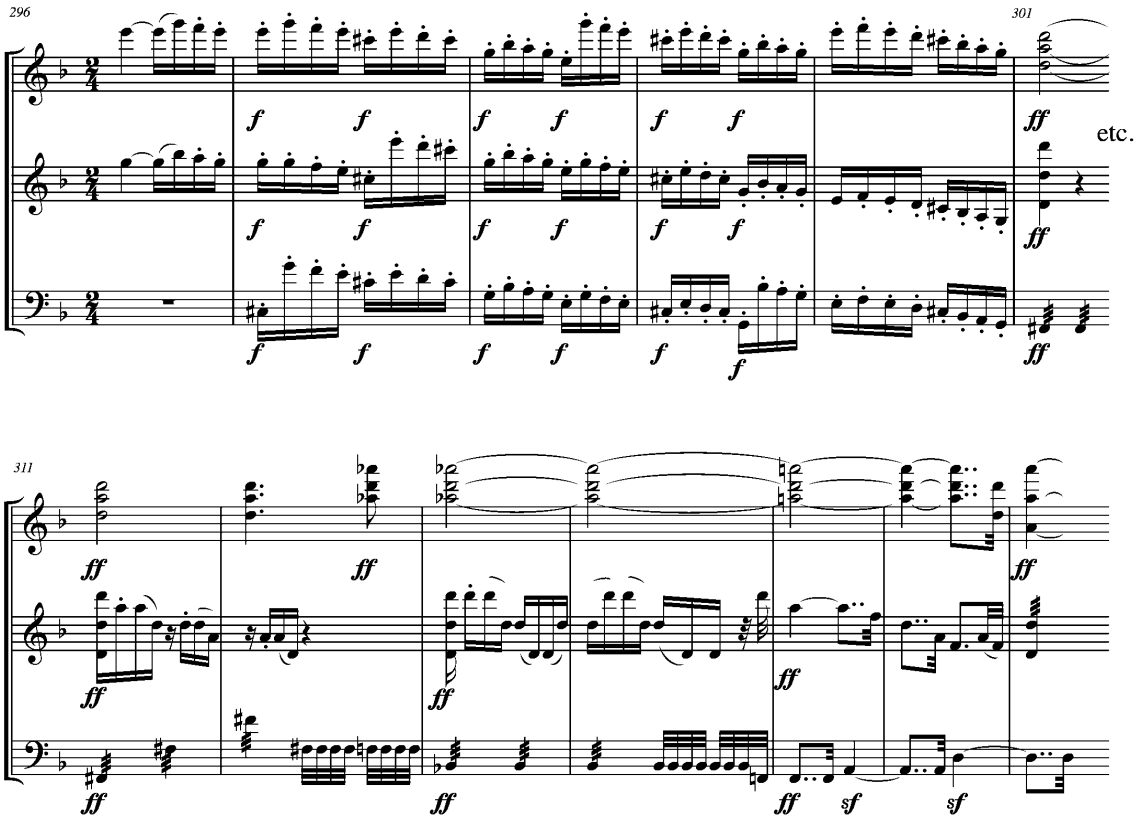
[49] Ibid.

[50] Susan McClary, "Getting Down Off the Beanstalk," *Minnesota Composers Forum Newsletter* (January 1987): 8.

[51] Susan McClary, *Feminine Endings: Gender, and Sexuality,* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1991), 112-31.

[52] Ibid., 128.



Example 2.1: Beethoven's Ninth Symphony, first movement, recapitulation.

Van den Toorn analyzes the moment of recapitulation as an unconventionally resolved augmented sixth chord (i.e., lacking an intervening dominant so that the augmented sixth chord resolves directly to the tonic). Van den Toorn notes that the omission of the dominant in resolutions of the augmented sixth chord occurs elsewhere in Beethoven, "indeed, in the Scherzo

movement of the Ninth itself."[53] In reference to this somewhat unorthodox resolution, Van den Toorn states:

> Indeed, shortchanging the counterpoint of this cadential cliché, circumventing its stylistic redundancy with inflections of a more immediately individual or contextual character, is fairly common in nineteenth century music… The effect of this delay was to blur the distinction between cadence and renewed departure—to allow, in the manner of a "structural downbeat," for a convergence of these two functions at the arrival of the cadential six-four chord.[54]

Van den Toorn attributes the frustration referred to by McClary to an individualized manifestation of the standard technique of delay inherent in the tension-release dichotomy typical of tonal music.

In fact, van den Toorn's analysis is not so far removed from McClary's reading: they agree that Beethoven's music adheres to the tonal principles of tension and release and that it also realizes this principle in a very distinctive way. If their interpretations differ that is because their discourse—and so also their conceptual framework—does as well. Unlike van den Toorn, who remains committed to the discourse of music theory and so also the tension-release principle that implicitly delimits it, McClary's primary goal is to move interpretive discourse beyond this tension-release dichotomy—what she refers to as the "climax-principle"[55]—into "alternative models and images of experiencing

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[53] Pieter C. van den Toorn, *Music, Politics, and the Academy,* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), 31.

[54] Ibid., 32.

[55] McClary, *Feminine Endings,* 130.

pleasure and other, less controlling ways of organizing sexuality, and—by extension—science and even political life."[56]

Van den Toorn acknowledges that what might have been fulfilled at the recapitulation is instead deferred, that it does not in fact find release; he objects, however, to McClary's sexual politics, which he believes limits, rather than expands possible reactions to the music. Van den Toorn suggests that,

> At the same time, deep, psychological tension, the fear and apprehension that underlie all emotion, need not be sexual in origin. For those inclined toward such signification, the psychological impact of the tension-and-release patterns of tonal music can be understood in ways unrelated to sexual conflict. The dynamics of tension of the departure that signals a departure-and-release pattern, can refer to any number of elementary and even biological needs and functions. Sex and sexuality are one; death and the emotions that accompany our perception of mortality are another.[57]

Van den Toorn tries to neutralize McClary's interpretation by neutering it, by replacing the charged specificity of her (to his mind) overly subjective reading with the cool generality of his objective description of "the music itself." To further marginalize McClary's reading, van den Toorn points to other interpretations that seem to contradict McClary's experience of the moment as "horrible." For example, he summarizes Donald Francis Tovey's reading that the F#AD at measure 301

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[56] Ibid., 131.

[57] van den Toorn, *Music, Politics, and the Academy*, 37.

> is heard to anticipate the key of D major, to reach out prematurely for its sunny, joyful rays; at measure 314, it slips back abruptly to the grim struggle of (F A D) and D minor.[58]

Van den Toorn notes that this reaction to the moment of recapitulation is "consistent with the idea of a 'quest for Elisium' [sic] in the Ninth," that has been suggested by several recent musicologists.[59]

Korsyn draws a parallel between the multiplicity of conflicting discourses detailed above and the Tower of Babel, where God confuses the tongues in order to frustrate the human attempt to build a tower to heaven. Solie disagrees with Korsyn's description of current discourse as a Tower of Babel. She argues that the fragmentation and infighting of musical discourse is not so much a "crisis," as a positive sign that the discourse matters. Solie suggests that multiple and inconsistent interpretations of the same music demonstrate a "richness of possibility." Yet, while holding up this richness of possibility as positive, Solie also recognizes,

> that the sheer incommensurability of the two sides of the musicological argument makes weighing their merits impossible, and no doubt it would improve the situation if we could disentangle more of them to see what counts against what. This presupposes, of course, that we really want to understand the conflict more than we want to cheer on a good fist-fight. It resonates with a long-standing wish of my own to organize a panel

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[58] Donald Francis Tovey, *Beethoven's Ninth Symphony,* (Edinburgh: James Thin, 1927), 19; in van den Toorn, *Music, Politics and the Academy,* 34-35.

[59] The other musicologist that van den Toorn is referring to are Maynard Solomon, *Beethoven Essays*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1988), 11-12; Leo Treitler, *Music and the Historical Imagination,* Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1989), 59-61; and Richard Taruskin, "Resisting the Ninth," *19th-Century Music* 12, no. 3 (1989): 241-56. To extend the debate further one only need to counter that this "positive" idea, if it is so, is essentially a quest narrative with a tacitly male subject and that maleness has actual discursive consequences.

> discussion that would struggle *together* with some of our more intractable problems—musical representation, say—rather than argue over whose solution is the best. I know it will never happen, though, because argument is our mother tongue.[60]

If there is indeed, as Korsyn suggests, a crisis brought on by the fragmentation, then, it will likely be found less in the multiplicity and richness of meaning induced by the Tower of Babel, than in the echoes of Solie's above statement. Indeed, Solie suggests that our preference for argument, over working together toward consensus, results in our inability to know whatever truth there is for us to know. In other words, the crisis of The Tower of Babel lies not in the multiplicity of meaning into which truth fragments, and the common struggle we must endure to reassemble and make it whole, but in its natural opposite, namely, the fear of confronting our intuition that that truth as such—that is, truth outside discourse—can never be known.

Scott Burnham observes something similar in Solie's writing and gives it a critical turn. He concludes that, along with the work of Nicholas Cook and Andreas Eichhorn, Solie's[61] leaves the impression that the Ninth is

> a great "white elephant" bequeathed from generation to generation, always wet with the latest ideological whitewashing, whether it be the bourgeois politics of the mid-nineteenth-century *Musikfest*, the

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[60] Ruth A. Solie, review of *Decentering Music: A Critique of Contemporary Musical Research,* by Kevin Korsyn, *Music & Letters*, vol. 85, (August 2004): 419.

[61] See also Ruth A. Solie, "Beethoven as Secular Humanist: Ideology and the Ninth Symphony in Nineteenth-Century Criticism," *Explorations in Music, the Arts, and Ideas: Essays in Honor of Leonard B. Meyer,* ed. Eugene Narmour and Ruth A. Solie, (Stuyvesant, New York: Pendragon, 1988), 1-42. Nicholas Cook, *Beethoven: Symphony No. 9*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993). Andreas Eichhorn, *Beethoven's Neunte Symphonie: Die Geschichte ihrer Aufführung und Rezeption*, (Kassel: Bärenreiter, 1993).

> establishment of the historical warrant of Wagner's music drama, the mandate of revolution and freedom, the moral precepts of Victorian England, the agendas of socialism, NATO, the Olympics, or German unity. As part of a recent multinational satellite broadcast, the Ninth may be said even to have swelled to the hopeful soundtrack of world unity, and yet it has, as a rule, been conscripted into the service of brotherhoods notoriously less than universal (Eichhorn shows how it was used by the French against the Germans and, of course, by the Germans against the French).[62]

Burnham infers a question that hovers between contradiction and paradox: if Beethoven's Ninth can mean *anything*, then, how can it really *mean* anything. Meaning requires difference, the discursive carving out of distinctions, in order to operate. But with all or nothing—in the end there can be no difference, only "ideological whitewashing," ideological fantasy. This observation led to Burnham's often-sited statement on the finale of the Ninth that: "Beethoven's anthemlike tune waves in the winds of our Western world as a blank flag awaiting the colors of a cause."[63] Daniel Chua draws an affinity between Burnham's thought and Adorno's. Adorno, Chua says, argues that Beethoven's music consists of an emptiness that is turned into a symphonic procedure, as if the music were signifying its own emptiness as form; absolute nothing is the programmatic element of these works; they are absolute precisely because they signify nothing.[64]

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[62] Scott Burnham, "Our Sublime Ninth," *Beethoven Forum* 5 (Spring 1996): 156.

[63] Ibid., 158

[64] Daniel K. L. Chua, "The Promise of Nothing: The Dialectic of Freedom in Adorno's Beethoven," *Beethoven Forum* 12 (Spring 2005): 21. Theodor W. Adorno, *Beethoven: The Philosophy of Music: Fragments and Texts,* ed. Rolf Tiedemann, trans. Edmund Jephcott (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1998), 121.

On the one hand, we have critics and analysts reading (specific) meaning and causes off of Beethoven's symphony; on the other hand it is presented as a "blank flag" that provides nothing except a screen on which to project our ideological fantasies.[65] The crisis of the Tower of Babel is therefore just another name for the dichotomy of all or nothing—all meaning or no meaning. The Tower of Babel thus represents a crisis of "truth," knowledge as either impossibly multiple (delusional) or impossibly non-existent.

According to Lacanian psychoanalysis, both cases are troubling for the subject. But for Lacan a delusional truth is in an immediate sense "safer" because it corresponds to neurosis (what Lacan considered to be the "normal" state of being for most subjects) that includes illnesses such as hysteria and obsession, whereas a complete fall from a belief in meaning exposes the subject to the more extreme mental illnesses of psychosis, which include schizophrenia and paranoia. Yet, Lacan also suggests that it is only by what he calls "traversing the fantasy" at the risk of falling into psychosis that we can hope to come to terms with meaning—or rather its relation to truth through discourse. While the delusional state of multiple meanings seems safer, it can do little to prevent a descent into psychosis once the protection of delusion has been removed and meaning is called into question.

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[65] In this respect, nothingness leads to abundance of meaning (because its constraints are nothing), which in turn leads to the dismissal of musical meaning as "constructed"—the claim that nothing means something can only mean "ideological delusion," a descent into fantasy that only returns to where it began: nothingness.

DECEPTION AND THE MINISTRY OF TRUTH

The flipside of Korsyn's Tower of Babel is what he calls The Ministry of Truth, a reference to one of the four ministries that governed Oceania in George Orwell's *1984*. Korsyn draws a parallel between Orwell's Ministry of Truth and what he sees as a dominant trend of centralizing and standardizing scholarly discourse by universities and professional societies. These pillars of the academic institution, inadvertently or not, support a structure that seems designed to stifle debate and "force consensus." This results in the commodification of knowledge and the "consolidation of the new professionalism." Korsyn complains that anything that does not fit this institutional standardization is pushed out and marginalized to the extent that it is almost entirely excluded from discourse.[66]

The result is another face of our disciplinary crisis, one revolving around a conspiracy of marginalization. Inculcating a strong faculty of self-censorship, an internalized "Big Brother" suppresses alternative ideas and pushes out all that does not conform. We are regulated by the institution, which demands increased efficiency and ever accelerating productivity, which the discipline abets by regulating and standardizing appropriate forms of discourse. Korsyn's idea seems to be that the Ministry of Truth marginalizes truth by refusing to support modes and rates of production that would allow its actual appearance.

Following Lacan, I would argue on the contrary that the crisis founded in the Ministry of Truth lies not in the marginalization of truth but in the supposed

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[66] Korsyn, *Decentering Music,* 6-7 and 20-25.

belief that the Ministry actively suppresses "truth." Korsyn's Ministry of Truth is assumed to be actively involved in deceiving us and forcing a "false" consensus in the discipline. We should remember that Orwell's Ministry of Truth actually did the opposite of what its name implies: it was responsible not only for the withholding of truth, but for falsifying historical events. Moreover, it was aptly named in a deeper sense in that it created/manufactured "truth" in the newspeak sense of the word.

Understood thus, such a crisis depends not on the *existence* of conspiracy per se, but on the *belief* in conspiracy, on the belief in an authoritarian figure who not only withholds all that it knows, but actively deceives. The evidence of conspiracy is the consistency by which a discourse is organized and produces meaning, a consistency that is understood to reside in and emanate from the authoritarian, Big Brother figure. The forced consensus of the university, by analogy, follows from a shift to consistency as the ground of institutional truth.

The mechanism might be more easily observed in another field. Writing about unintended consequences of the proliferation of media outlets, Robert Ray argues:

> No longer are people restricted to a small handful of news sources for information, instead with the advent of cable TV and internet news sites and blogs, people can, with the click of the mouse, choose the news they want, presented in the manner (ideologically speaking) they choose. This all creates a type of cynical irony that no longer values truth, but coherency.[67]

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[67]Robert Ray, *A Certain Tendency in the Hollywood Cinema, 1930 – 1980,* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1985), 266.

In American politics, for example, coherency is promoted by carefully self-selecting one's sources: conservatives get their news from Fox News, The Drudge Report, and Rush Limbaugh; liberals get theirs from Daily Kos, The Huffington Post, and The Nation. Where information is presented (constructed) in a logically coherent, consistent and ideological affirming manner, hard-core conservatives and liberals never have to confront conflicting points of view, never have to confront the "truth." Indeed, to listen to the other side is to damage the coherency that stands in for the "truth" and herein lies the heart of this crisis. In other words, the crisis does not lie in the isolation of ideological groups or the marginalization of conflicting points of view, but rather, as is evident in American politics, in the fact that one group always assumes the other is suppressing the truth, is delusional, or is somehow trying to deceive. The coherence of the construction that the Ministry of Truth depends on to convince, works by way of paranoia—one of the forms of psychosis.

Returning to the debate revolving around the Ninth for a moment, we can draw a parallel between the construction of knowledge in American politics and the various ideological camps of musical discourse. For example, feminists need only choose to identify with the internal consistency of McClary's reading or formalists with that of van den Toorn's (or some other musical camp with a different type of musical discourse) for the Ministry to assert its claim to truth. Either way, a sense of paranoia grips each group when it encounters the other: each group assumes that those who identify with a different method are delusional or that there is an overriding force conspiring against them and

keeping the "truth" from being known. Such paranoia would explain, at least in part, why the debate seems so personal and incendiary at times.

We can now see how the crisis of Korsyn's Ministry of Truth evolves from the fragmentation of the Tower of Babel. In a later chapter, we will see that Lacanian theory suggests the Ministry of Truth can be effectively countered by repositioning the notion of "truth."

POSTMODERN ENNUI, IRONY AND "*THE SIMPSONS* EFFECT"

These crises have undeniably produced a certain amount of intellectual weariness within our discipline, not only, as noted above in Solie's response to Korsyn, with having to once again confront an insolvable crisis, but also with the overuse of the postmodern deconstructive techniques that produced the crises in the first place. This postmodern ennui is produced not only by the existence of conflicting and irreconcilable interpretations, but also by the sheer accumulation of interpretations themselves (the Tower of Babel).

One of the primary modes of postmodern interpretation is irony. As a rhetorical figure, irony generally suggests access to a hidden, usually subversive knowledge or meaning because it means something other that it says. For example, the statement "Tony is a tiger" can be read figuratively ("Tony is wild *like* a tiger"); it can be read literally ("Tony *is* a tiger [at the zoo perhaps]"); or the statement could be read ironically ("the placid Tony is *definitely not* a tiger"). A problem occurs, however, when we begin to presume every statement is ironic, thus, eliminating both the figurative and literally readings. When we fall into this "over-ironized" state, truth becomes so obfuscated that we can no longer

recognize the difference between a sincere statement and an ironic one. The effect of this over-ironization is demonstrated in the conversation between the disaffected youths from *The Simpsons* quote in the epigraph to this chapter. ("Here comes that cannonball guy. He's cool." "Are you being sarcastic, dude?" "I don't even know anymore.") In this quote, the youths are confused by their own statement to such an extent that they have no idea whether or not they believe the Cannonball Guy to be cool.

Nowhere are the effects of this over-ironization so evident than in the medium of television. Indeed, David Foster Wallace suggests that the medium itself is inherently ironic with its rapid-fire editing and frequent juxtapositions of high and low, "real" and simulated. Television, he says, has made irony into the dominant cultural trope of our time.[68] Robert Ray likewise argues that television unwittingly deconstructed the traditional Hollywood genres. He notes:

> In the spring of 1963 a television viewer could watch as network videotapes of the Birmingham race riots led directly into 'Cheyenne', 'Laramie', 'Mr. Ed', 'Ozzie and Harriet', or 'Wagon Train', depending on the network and the night.[69]

In the context of the television schedule, then, standard genres such as the western, the screwball comedy, and the gangster film became increasingly visible as products in their own right, little different in that respect from the

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[68] David Foster Wallace, "E Unibus Pluram: Television and U.S. Fiction," in David Foster Wallace, *A Supposedly Fun Thing I'll Never Do Again,* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1992), 62.

[69] Ray, *A Certain Tendency,* 266.

commercials that interrupted them.[70] For Ray and Wallace the already deconstructed world of *The Simpsons,* "reality" TV, and self-reflexive commercials, television has so conditioned audiences "that irony and parody no longer function as sharp weapons of critique because they are already everywhere."[71]

I refer to such over-ironization as *The Simpsons* Effect. I use *The Simpsons* here because as Chris Turner notes in his definitive book on the show, *The Simpsons* is "by far the most important cultural institution of its time: the equal of any single body of work to emerge from our pop-cultural stew in the last century in any medium."[72] Turner points to the show's extraordinary talent for self-referencing irony, allusion to popular culture and criticism of the media as the epitome of postmodernism.[73] He argues that,

> All that self-aware, self-referencing irony that makes up postmodern culture's signature pose comes as naturally to *The Simpsons* as winking at the camera or having Homer bellow "Yabba-dabba-doo!" Some shows have to manufacture their ironic references, but irony is built right into *The Simpsons*, because everything about *The Simpsons* is derivative.[74]

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[70] Moreover, there is the gradual awareness that we are the product. That is, what pays the bills for television are the ads, and ad rates have been determined increasingly over time by ratings. So, what television in fact sells are eyeballs: that is, you and me. I would argue that the over-ironization is a response to this knowledge, whether we are fully conscious or only subliminally aware of it.

[71] Rombes, "*Blue Velvet* Underground," 70.

[72] Chris Turner, *Planet Simpson: How a Cartoon Masterpiece Defined a Generation,* (Cambridge, MA: Da Capo Press, 2004), 5.

[73] Ibid., 11.

[74] Ibid., 414.

The Simpsons, being the quintessential example of postmodernism, does not however, make it immune to the effects of over-ironization. Indeed, Turner points to several moments in the show where you can "find yourself wondering what the point is."[75] Where is the truth? Is the Cannonball Guy really cool or not?

If over-ironization has received scant attention in recent musical scholarship, irony itself has had quite a lot. Rey M. Longyear might have been able to claim in 1970 that "the connection between Beethoven and romantic irony has been missed,"[76] this can hardly said to be the case anymore. Indeed, Scott Burnham claims "the irony in Beethoven's heroic style is paradoxically less noticeable because it is in fact more a fundamental condition of the music, less a scrim than the stage itself."[77] More and more writers come to terms with inconsistencies in Beethoven's music by reading it as ironic, and this trend is especially evident in the discourse concerning one of the most inconsistent moments in the Ninth: the Turkish march from the fourth movement (see Example 2.2).

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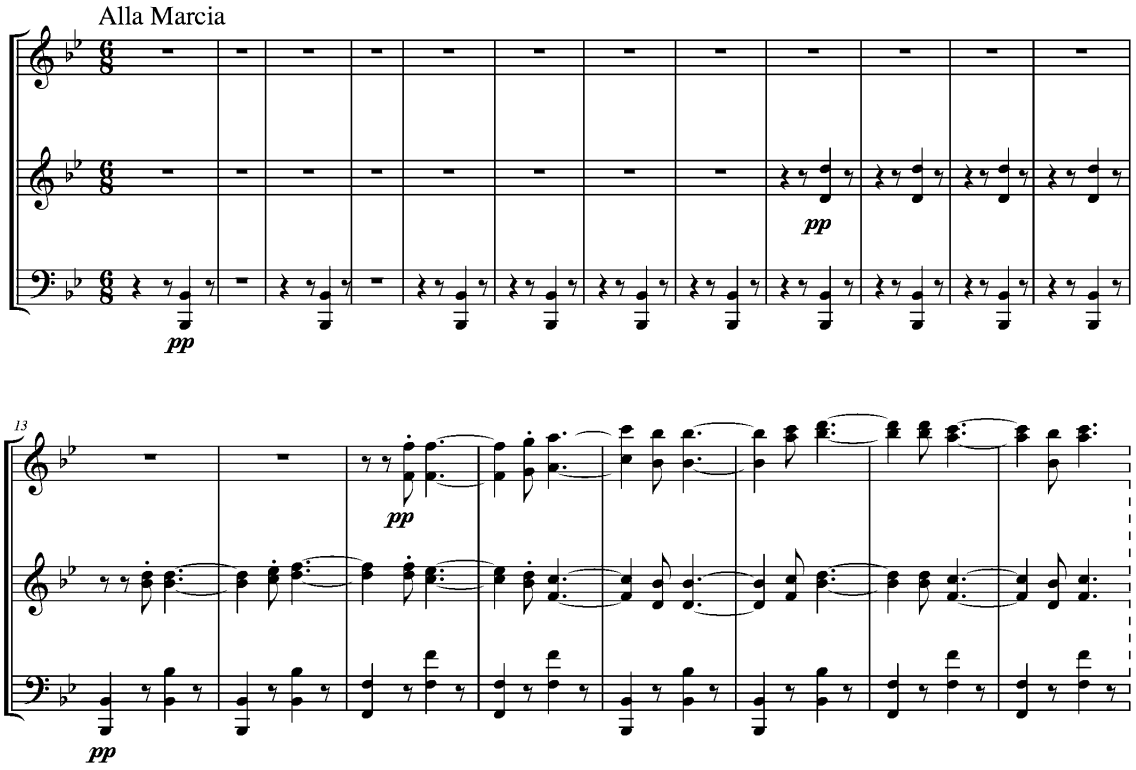
[75] Ibid., 420-21.

[76] Rey M. Longyear, "Beethoven and Romantic Irony," *The Musical Quarterly,* vol. 56, no. 4, Special Issue Celebrating the Bicentennial of the Birth of Beethoven, (October 1970): 647.

[77] Scott Burnham, *Beethoven Hero,* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1995), 145.



Example 2.2: Beethoven's Ninth Symphony, fourth movement, Turkish march.

Robert Hatten describes the Turkish march as a type of "self-deflating, and thus humanizing" irony.[78] The drop in stylistic register from the "high" material preceding the march to the "lowness" of the march itself, he says,

> achieves a thematically appropriate universality by embracing the low style (democratically promoting the dignity of the common man) and reaching out across cultural boundaries (since '*alle Mesnschen werden Bruder*').[79]

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[78] Robert S. Hatten, *Musical Meaning in Beethoven: Markedness, Correlation, and Interpretation,* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994), 174-75.

[79] Ibid., 81-82.

Nicholas Cook likewise interprets the interruption of the Turkish march, into the otherwise serious Finale, as ironic, though he interprets the gesture somewhat differently from Hatten:

> I can think of no better description of bar 331 of the Ninth Symphony finale, the beginning of the 'Turkish' music, where the majestic tones of "And the seraph stands with God" are punctuated by the "absurd grunts" (some people have called them farts) of the bassoons and bass drum. At this point Beethoven's music deconstructs Schiller's text. Or maybe Schiller's text deconstructs itself; the juxtaposition of the worm and the seraph is in itself incongruous enough. Either way, the affirmative message is, if not denied, then undermined; to borrow Longyear's formulation, Beethoven detaches himself from it, suggests that it may be illusory.[80]

Cook applies this same interpretation to other moments of the Finale. However, even though Hatten and Cook both read the same moment of the Finale as ironic, they interpret this irony in completely different, almost antithetical ways: for Hatten the irony makes universality a possibility; for Cook, the ironies in the Finale "clearly express Beethoven's detachment from his own message; nothing could more clearly indicate the retrospective, and therefore ultimately futile, nature of the Enlightenment ideals that Schiller's works proclaim."[81]

The fact that Hatten and Cook interpret the same moment as ironic, yet, differ fundamentally in how to interpret that irony is in itself not a sign of crisis. Such contradiction may be troubling to those wishing to find truth in discursive consistency, but it also adds to the richness of interpretation. What is of interest

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[80] Cook, *Beethoven,* 104.

[81] Ibid.

for the argument here, however, is the common interpretive strategy of reading and thereby containing the force of juxtaposition through the figure of irony. *The Simpsons* Effect is simply this interpretive strategy to an extreme.

As Ray suggests, the excess of cynical irony produced when coherency is valued above "truth" creates a crisis of knowledge. What do we do, then, when juxtaposition is found everywhere; when every statement is taken as ironic and subversive; when our discursive competence is determined by our ability to wield irony as a tool to produce interpretive consistency at the expense of eliminating the possibility of reading any statement sincerely—as meaning, or at least attempting to mean, what it says? In that sense, both the Tower of Babel and the Ministry of Truth produce cynical irony. On the one hand, irony is a discursive tool that operates on juxtaposition in the service of the proliferation of meaning; on the other hand, it is a discursive tool that locates "meaningful" juxtaposition in order to convince us of the existence of hidden meaning. Yet, it is not simply (or only) a product of the Tower and the Ministry. Because of the way it consistently foregrounds irony, it is also a crisis in its own right.

My use of the term *The Simpsons* Effect is an attempt to name the crisis of knowledge and truth that follows from the recognition that even irony has been institutionalized, now so mundane as to be banal. Today, irony is made bought and sold like any other commodity. The weariness with postmodernism, whose adherents are so fond of reveling in the ironies of contemporary culture, seems a response to this crisis, where a refusal of irony is purchased at the price of naïve and delusional nostalgia, its acceptance seems only to acquiesce to co-option. In terms of the institutions of music scholarship, the crisis seems to force a choice

between cynicism, where we in fact acquiesce and choose a scholarly mode of inquiry on the basis of the professional success it promises; and impotence, where at best we can "talk about" the symptoms of the crisis we are experiencing.

Recognition of *The Simpsons* Effect has the effect of mapping a discursive terrain somewhat different from that marked by the boundaries of the Tower of Babel and the Ministry of Truth. Countering *The Simpsons* Effect requires a discursive strategy at odds with irony without succumbing to naïveté, a strategy that I will call "sincerity." Such a strategy may well prove productive, critical, and indeed subversive in a world beset by *The Simpsons* Effect. Here, boundaries are defined by irony and sincerity. Drawing on Lacan I negotiate these boundaries not by dismissing juxtapositions as ironic and not by simply trying to reclaim a serious reading, but by examining them as eruptions of the Lacanian Real.

Chapter Three: Music, Violence, and *Jouissance* From Orange to Blue

David Lynch once made the statement that nearly every one of Kubrick's films is in his top ten.[82] While Lynch never specifically identifies *A Clockwork Orange* (1971) as a direct influence on *Blue Velvet* (1986), the marked similarities between the two films suggests a subliminal link, if not a direct one. These similarities begin in the very first frame of each film, where the opening credits for both are projected onto their title colors: *A Clockwork Orange* has a bright reddish-orange screen, *Blue Velvet* a sea of blue. Both films depict dystopian worlds that contain unbridled violence, rape, and mind control. Both films make use of extreme violence and graphic sexuality. Beyond these visual, thematic, and critical similarities, *A Clockwork Orange* and *Blue Velvet* also share a distinctive musical style.

This chapter explores that musical style in detail beginning with an examination of the way each film associates pre-existing, diegetic music with violence. It is typical to read the juxtapositions between the positive messages traditionally associated with the pre-existing music, such as joy or love, and the violent images of these films as ironic. As I noted in the previous chapter, this interpretive strategy is a manifestation of *The Simpsons* Effect. The second half of this chapter argues, on the contrary, that this typical reading significantly distorts the effect these juxtapositions have in the films. Instead, I read them not as ironic, but as eruptions of the Lacanian Real, showing how music functions as

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[82] Rodley, *Lynch on Lynch*, 77.

object *a*, providing access to *jouissance*. Finally, this chapter suggests that the typical reading of these juxtapositions as ironic actually creates, a situation more horrible than the dystopian worlds depicted in each of the films: that is, an attitude that *jouissance* is impossible. A reading of music as object *a* eliminates this horror, reassuring the subject that somewhere, full, enjoyment exists.

MUSIC AND VIOLENCE IN ORANGE

Based on Anthony Burgess' 1962 novel of the same name, Kubrick's *A Clockwork Orange* depicts a futuristic society where youth gangs run rampant, engaging in random, sadistic acts of violence. The story concerns Alex (Malcolm McDowell), the leader of a particularly vicious gang who also happens to have a deep love for Beethoven. After acts of extreme brutality, Alex is caught and sent to prison. In exchange for a reduced sentence, Alex volunteers for an experimental rehabilitation program called the Ludovico Treatment (a type of brainwashing/aversion therapy). "Cured" of his violent tendencies after only a couple of weeks, Alex is released from prison. Having no place to go, he wanders the streets where, unable to defend himself, he is relentlessly tortured by various figures from his past. After a failed suicide attempt, he is sent to a hospital where the effects of the Ludovico Treatment are reversed. The film ends with the suggestion that the old, "evil" Alex has returned.

On the issue of music and violence, Kubrick explains that Burgess' prose worked to stylize the violence and one of the challenges he faced was how to stylize the violence in the film without the benefit of the writing style. Kubrick's solution was to choreograph the fight scenes to music, turning the violence into a

kind of "stylized dance."[83] Generally, Kubrick choreographed the violence to Rossini's *La gazza ladra (The Thieving Magpie)* played non-diegetically on the soundtrack. Interestingly, even though Rossini's overture accompanies nearly all of the violence in the first half of the film[84], Kubrick's use of Beethoven's Ninth has garnered most of the critical attention. Why might this be the case? Why do the stakes seem higher with Beethoven's Ninth than with Rossini's overture? (See Table 3.1 for the timings of Beethoven's music in *A Clockwork Orange*).

Time	**Music**	**Scene**
9:47—10:15	Fifth Symphony, 4-note motive from first movement.	Doorbell at Alexander's "HOME". Rings five times.
14:42—15:09	Ninth Symphony, "Ode to Joy".	Woman sings at the Korova Milkbar.
18:51—22:19	Ninth Symphony, second movement, Scherzo.	Playing in Alex's room as he masturbates off camera.
25:53—28:11	Ninth Symphony, fourth movement, "Turkish march".	Alex picking up two girls in a record store.
1:15:36—1:19:18	Ninth Symphony, fourth movement, "Turkish march," fugue, and finale.	Alex's moment of breakthrough during the Ludovico Treatment.
1:58:08—2:01:10	Ninth Symphony, second movement, Scherzo.	Alex's torture by Mr. Alexander and attempt at suicide.
2:12:24—2:13:51	Ninth Symphony, fourth movement, finale	Alex is cured and able to have sexual/violent fantasies.

Table 3.1: Timings for the occurrences of Beethoven's music in *A Clockwork Orange*.[85]

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[83] Gene D. Phillips and Rodney Hill, *The Encyclopedia of Stanley Kubrick,* Great Filmmakers Series, ed. John C. Tibbetts and James M. Welsh (New York: Facts on File, 2002), 52-53.

[84] The most notable juxtaposition of violence with music in the first part of the film that is not Rossini's, occurs when Alex sings "Singin' in the Rain," ala Gene Kelly during the gang's assault at the Alexander's home.

[85] Stanley Kubrick, dir. *A Clockwork Orange,* 1971, 137 min., Warner Home Video, 2001 Digitally Restored and Remastered DVD.

To explore these questions it is worth going through the occurrences of the Ninth in some detail. We first learn of Alex's love for Beethoven in the erotically decorated establishment called the Korova Milkbar, a bar that serves hallucinogenic spiked drinks (called milk-plus) from the breasts of coin-operated mannequins. When a woman spontaneously sings the "Ode to Joy," Alex immediately recognizes the tune and for him it is "bliss and heaven" (see Figure 3.1). Dim, a member of Alex's gang, makes fun of the singer and Alex hits him for "being a bastard with no manners."

Figure 3.1: A woman spontaneously sings the "Ode to Joy".

Alex later returns home, where his room is decorated with an image of an erotic, spread-eagled female on one wall, and a window shade of Beethoven on the other (see Figure 3.2). Alex drops in a cassette of Beethoven's Ninth, what he refers to as "the perfect ending" to the evening. While listening to the scherzo

from the opening of the second movement, his pet python phallically explores the exposed crotch area of the female figure on the wall and various shots of dancing crucifixes alternate to the beat of the music. As Alex moans orgiastically, several violent and sexually suggestive images are flashed on-screen insinuating that he masturbates just out of view of the camera.[86]

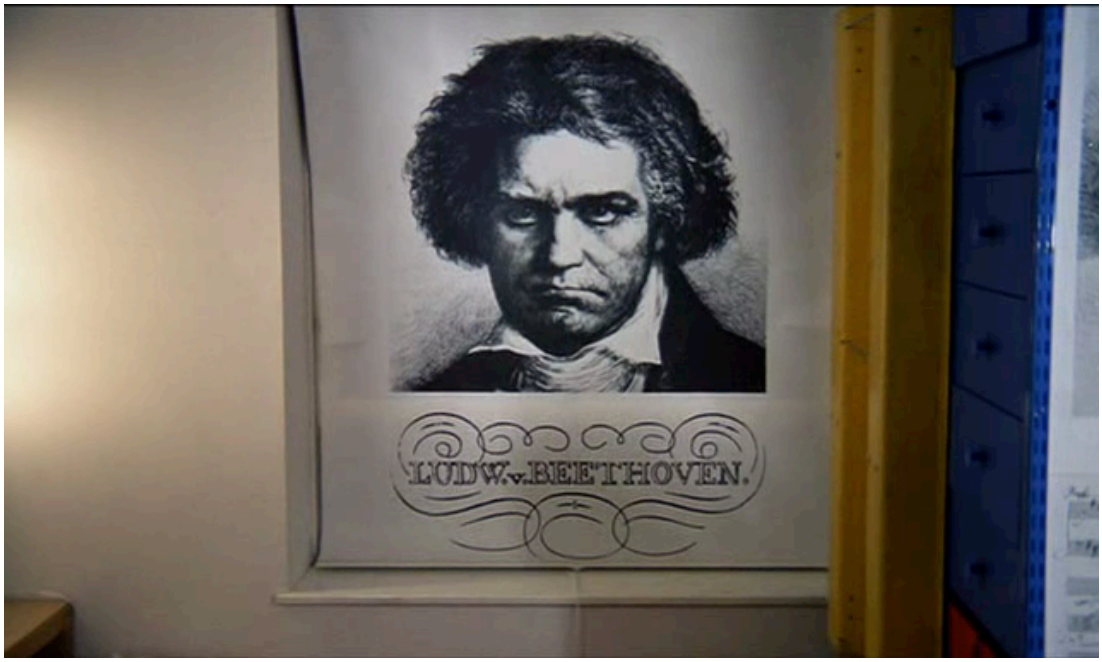

Figure 3.2: Poster of Beethoven as a window shade in Alex's room.

The most notorious appropriation of the Ninth occurs during the break-though moment in Alex's treatment. The Ludovico Treatment (for which Alex volunteers) is a simple, yet, effective type of aversion therapy where doctors give patients a serum and, then, make them repeatedly watch movie scenes

[86] This playing of Beethoven's Ninth Symphony extends well beyond this scene, even as Alex wakes up the next morning and wanders around his parents' flat.

containing extreme amounts of brutality (see Figure 3.3). The serum induces sickness, and patients gradually associate this sickness with the on-screen violence. The result is that their love for violence is transformed into loathing. Unintentionally, and quite by chance, one of the movies Alex is forced to watch (a film about Nazi atrocities) is scored with the Turkish march from the Finale of the Ninth. Alex thinks it quite unfair that he should feel sick while listening to his beloved Beethoven and pleads (unsuccessfully) for them to stop playing his favorite piece of music. This association between the Ninth and violence "cures" Alex, and he is released from prison. He is now docile and harmless due to the physical sickness he experiences every time he has violent or sexual thoughts, but an unexpected consequence of the treatment is that Alex also feels the same sickness towards the music of Beethoven.

Figure 3.3: Alex (Malcolm McDowell) undergoes the Ludovico Treatment.

After being tortured by various figures from his past, Alex takes refuge in the "HOME" of Mr. Alexander (one of Alex's former victims). Through a story in the newspaper, Mr. Alexander learns that the Ludovico Treatment has caused Alex to experience certain side-effects when he hears Beethoven's Ninth. Having been drugged by Mr. Alexander, Alex later awakens in a locked bedroom with the sounds of the Ninth (the scherzo from the beginning of the second movement) playing from below. Overcome with sickness, Alex staggers around the room, crying out: "Turn it off!! Stop it!!" Downstairs, Mr. Alexander, especially delighted with his opportunity for revenge, fiendishly turns up the volume (see Figure 3.4). In despair, Alex throws himself out of the upstairs window in an attempt to "snuff it."

Figure 3.4: Mr. Alexander exacts his revenge by torturing Alex with the Ninth.

And finally, at the end of the film, the definitive moment of Alex's "rehabilitation" occurs when we see that he is once again able to listen to his beloved "Ludwig Van's" Ninth Symphony (the closing orgiastic moments of the finale) and have sexual and violent thoughts without sickness. This final juxtaposition between Beethoven and violence suggests that the "evil" Alex has returned (see Figure 3.5).

Figure 3.5: After the Ludovico Treatment is reversed, Alex is once again able to listen to the Ninth.

Much as Hatten and Cook read the interpolation of the "low" Turkish mark as ironic, critics of *A Clockwork Orange* read the juxtaposition of Beethoven's Ninth and violence in it as ironic. The literary critic Jean-Pierre Barricelli, for instance, criticizes the "grotesque juxtaposition" of violence and music in the Burgess novel as nothing more than a "simple" literary technique that takes

"bulwarks of our culture" and "somehow employs them to comment directly on Western moral bankruptcy or indirectly to question Western achievement."[87] Moreover, whereas Beethoven's music appears in Burgess' novel, the association is far more focused in the film because Kubrick transforms Burgess' classical music loving sociopath into one obsessed solely with Beethoven Ninth.[88]

James Wierzbicki comes at the film from a somewhat different angle. Having catalogued nearly two dozen, mostly Hollywood films that make use of Beethoven's Ninth, Wierzbicki argues that *A Clockwork Orange*, with its associations of violence and rape, is the paradigm for all the negative, critical appropriations of the Ninth.[89] Such appropriations, he says, seek to subvert the accepted social conception of the work as vested in the "symbolistic triad" of "anti-Fascist politics, Judeo-Christian morality, and the purest forms of joy—romantic as well as spiritual."[90] Krin Gabbard and Shailja Sharma likewise conclude that music's primary function in the film is to create an ironic counterpoint,[91] and Peter Rabinowitz dismisses music's role, claiming that its primary purpose is merely formal, an arbitrary token of cultural capital used

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[87] Jean-Pierre Barricelli, "Beethovenian Overlays by Carpentier and Burgess: The Ninth in Grotesque Juxtapositions," in *Melopoiesis: Approaches to the Study of Literature and Music,* (New York: University Press, 1988), 124.

[88] Barricelli, "Beethovenian Overlays," 124.

[89] James Wierzbicki, "Banality Triumphant: Iconographic Use of Beethoven's Ninth Symphony in Recent Films," *Beethoven Forum* 10 (Fall 2003): 113-38.

[90] Ibid., 126.

[91] Krin Gabbard and Shailja Sharma, "Stanley Kubrick and the Art of Cinema," *Stanley Kubrick's 'A Clockwork Orange,'* ed. Stuart McDougal (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 85-108.

simply to offset the violence.[92] As we will see below, one effect of these dismissals is that critics miss the important role the Ninth plays in the film.[93]

Interpretations of music in Lynch's *Blue Velvet* follow much the same path as those of *A Clockwork Orange*. In both cases, the juxtaposition of music and violence is understood as ironic commentary. The primary difference is the type of music each film deploys: where Kubrick uses Beethoven's Ninth, Lynch employs 1960's American popular songs. An examination of both *A Clockwork Orange* and *Blue Velvet* will reveal that music shares the same function in both films even if the music itself is extremely different—one considered to be the Janus-faced culmination of the classical symphony and the beginning of the romantic; the other considered "low" American popular music.

MUSIC AND VIOLENCE IN BLUE

Lynch's *Blue Velvet* takes place in the ostensibly utopia of Lumberton, USA. The film tells the story of Jeffery Beaumont (Kyle MacLachlan) a young student who arrives home from college to visit his ill father, who is in the hospital after suffering a life-threatening stroke. As Jeffery walks home from the hospital, he stumbles across a rotting human ear covered with ants and sets out—in Hardy Boys fashion—to discover the ear's owner.

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[92] Peter J. Rabinowitz, "'A Bird of Like Rarest Spun Heavenmetal': Music in *A Clockwork Orange*," *Stanley Kubrick's 'A Clockwork Orange'*, 109-130.

[93] One notable exception is Katherine McQuistion, *Recognizing Music in the Films of Stanley Kubrick,* (Ph. D. diss., Columbia University, 2005).

Jeffery, with help from Sandy (the girl next door played by Laura Dern), learns that a woman named Dorothy Vallens (Isabella Rossellini) may be involved with the discarded ear. Dorothy is a torch singer at a local establishment called the Slow Club where her signature song is a rendition of "Blue Velvet." Jeffery spies on Dorothy and learns that a man named Frank Booth (Dennis Hopper) has kidnapped Dorothy's husband, Don (owner of the discarded ear), and her son, Don Junior. Frank, a sadistic sociopath with an appetite for drugs and violence, extorts sadomasochistic sexual favors from Dorothy by threatening to kill her family if she does not comply.[94] Jeffery is inevitably drawn deeper into Lumberton's dark underbelly where blackmail, illegal drugs, unrestrained violence, and sadomasochistic sexual forces run rampant, but just as these dark forces threaten to consume him, he is rescued by Sandy's love for him. The film ends with the restoration of the utopian vision of Lumberton.

Blue Velvet was Lynch's first movie that drew extensively on music—rock, pop and contemporary—to create and define his cinematic vision.[95] Before *Blue Velvet,* Lynch claimed to be musically "frustrated" due to the traditional practice of directors not being able to "sit down with the composer until late in the

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[94] Frank Booth ranks number thirty-six on AFI's list of the top 50 film villains of all time. AFI's 100 Years...100 Heroes & Villains; available at http://www.afi.com/tvevents/100years/handv.aspx; accessed 21 April 2007.

[95] In an interview with Chris Rodley, Lynch mentions that his passion for music began as a child on a warm, twilight, summer night in Boise, Idaho. His friend came running towards him from down the street, and said, "You missed it!" What Lynch had missed was "Elvis on Ed Sullivan!" Lynch says that this "just, like, set a fire in my head." Elvis, then, became "a bigger event in my head because I missed it." Rodley, *Lynch on Lynch,* 126-27.

game."[96] Lynch's use of popular music is heavily inspired by the deceptively simple and naïve lyrics of the songs, but for Lynch it is not so much what you say but "it's the way you say it." Anybody can put pop music into a film but for Lynch,

> it's gotta have some ingredients that are really digging in to be part of the story. It could be in an abstract way or it could be in a lyric way. Then it's really, like, you can't live without it. It just can't be another piece of music.[97]

Discussing the music in *Blue Velvet*, Michel Chion goes so far as to suggest that Lynch may have even "written parts of the script from free associations triggered by the lyrics."[98] Lynch borrows three 1960s American love songs for *Blue Velvet* and juxtaposes them with images of extreme violence in order to twist their meanings (or reveal meanings otherwise submerged in the music). He uses Bobby Vinton's "Blue Velvet" (1963) Roy Orbison's "In Dreams" (1963) and Ketty Lester's "Love Letters" (1962). (See Table 3.2 for a list of occurrences and timings of these three songs in *Blue Velvet*).

Lynch's use of these early 1960s love songs at first seems to evoke a kind of wholesome nostalgia for an earlier, simpler America. For example, the wholesomeness of Lumberton is established in the opening shots of the film: accompanied by Vinton's "Blue Velvet" playing nondiegetically on the soundtrack, we see images of a sunny day, white picket fences, uniform green

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[96] Rodley, *Lynch on Lynch,* 127.

[97] Ibid., 130.

[98] Chion, *David Lynch,* 89.

lawns, robust flower beds, a bright shiny fire truck complete with friendly firemen, and children walking home from school single file (see Figure 3.6). This utopian vision of Lumberton is suddenly dispelled, however, when Mr. Beaumont falls to the ground from a stroke while watering his lawn. The seriousness of the situation is undermined not only by the slow-motion shots of a happy little dog that continues to play with the water coming from a hose that is still being held by Mr. Beaumont as he lay unconscious in the mud, but also, by the Vinton tune that continues to play over the scene (see Figure 3.7).

Time	**Music**	**Scene**
1:48—3:29	"Blue Velvet" sung by Bobby Vinton.	Opening and Mr. Beaumont's stroke.
28:22—29:24	"Blue Velvet" sung by Isabella Rossellini.	Jeffery and Sandy go to see Dorothy at the Slow Club.
59:10—1:00:25	"Blue Velvet" sung by Isabella Rossellini.	Jeffery and Frank listening to Dorothy at the Slow Club the night after Frank rapes Dorothy.
1:06:33—1:07:28	"Blue Velvet" sung by Bobby Vinton.	Jeffery walks to meet Dorothy at her apartment where they make love.
1:18:47—1:20:13	"In Dreams" sung by Roy Orbison.	Ben lip-synching for Frank.
1:24:15—1:26:57	"In Dreams" sung by Roy Orbison.	Frank beats Jeffery and asks "Do you know what a Love Letter is?"
1:48:48—1:48:52	"Love Letters" sung by Ketty Lester.	Jeffery discovers both Detective Gordon and Don have received "Love Letters."
1:58:34—1:59:01	"Blue Velvet" sung by Isabella Rossellini.	Final shot of the film with Dorothy and her son in the park.

Table 3.2: Timings for occurrences of "Blue Velvet," "In Dreams," and "Love Letters" in *Blue Velvet*.[99]

[99] David Lynch, *Blue Velvet*, 1986, 121 min., MGM Home Entertainment, Inc., 2002, Special Edition DVD.

Figure 3.6: The opening image depicting the utopia of Lumberton, USA.

Figure 3.7: Mr. Beaumont laying in the mud after a dehabilitating stroke, while a little dog happily plays in the water coming from the hose.

Later in the film, the song occurs diegetically when Jeffery visits Dorothy at the Slow Club and she sings a tearfully sentimental rendition (see Figure 3.8). This scene occurs just after Jeffery has snuck into Dorothy's apartment and witnessed a bizarre, fetishtic sex scene between her and Frank involving a blue velvet robe, drugs (nitrous oxide), physical abuse, and apparent rape—all of

which Dorothy masochistically seems to enjoy (see Figure 3.9).[100] At this point, the ordinary association between the song "Blue Velvet" and innocent love has been completely distorted. The song no longer only represents innocent, but also becomes a metaphor for all that is wrong with Dorothy's life, all that is wrong with Lumberton.[101]

Figure 3.8: Dorothy Vallens (Isabella Rossellini) singing at the Slow Club.

Frank eventually discovers that Jeffery and Dorothy are having an affair, as a result, Frank kidnaps Jeffery, taking him to Ben's house where Don and Don, Jr. are being held. Ben (Dean Stockwell) is a suave pale figure, who is obviously under the influence of various illegal drugs. In another bizarre scene, Ben (at Frank's insistence) sings Roy Orbison's "In Dreams," another nostalgic love song (see Figure 3.10). In Lynch's world, the lyrics "A candy-colored clown they call

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[100] Frank actually rapes Dorothy with a piece of blue velvet that he wraps around his fist.

[101] The inclusion of an actual piece of blue velvet in subsequent acts of violence and murder, reinforces these twisted connotations throughout the remainder of the film.

the sandman/tiptoes to my room every night" and "I close my eyes then I drift away," no longer suggest a young man dreaming of his love, but take on a grotesque meaning when placed in the context of Ben and Frank popping pills and discussing kidnapping, murder and drug deals.

Figure 3.9: Frank's (Dennis Hopper) sadistic rape of Dorothy with a piece of blue velvet hanging from his mouth.

Figure 3.10: Frank hangs on Ben's (Dean Stockwell) every word as he lip-synchs Roy Orbison's "In Dreams".

Frank leaves Ben's place and takes Jeffery out to the country where he beats him near to death while "In Dreams" plays on Frank's cassette player. The brutal beating of Jeffery is preceded by a monologue where Frank, once again high on nitrous oxide, smears lipstick on his own face and begins kissing Jeffery. As Frank kisses Jeffery, he recites the lyrics from a third nostalgic love song, Ketty Lester's "Love Letters" (see Figure 3.11). The lyrics of the song are ostensibly about a young woman finding comfort by reading her boyfriend's love letter, but Frank asks Jeffery:

> Do you know what a love letter is man? It's a fucking bullet, you don't want a love letter from me, cause if you get a love letter from me, you're fucking dead man!

Figure 3.11: Frank warning Jeffery (Kyle MacLachlan) that he doesn't want to receive a "love letter".

Here we have a scene where not only the song "In Dreams" takes on additional associations of extreme violence, drug use, and mental instability, but the lyrics of a third song ("Love Letters") become so distorted that a comforting

love letter is transformed into a bullet. Moreover, the quoting of "Love Letters" while "In Dreams" is playing diegetically over the scene suggests Frank literally "dreams" of killing Jeffery—something he nearly accomplishes with the beating.

Finally, in the penultimate scene of the film, Jeffery rushes off to Dorothy's apartment where he finds her husband, Don, tied to a chair—missing an ear and shot in the head—as well as a crooked cop named Detective Gordon—also shot in the head but still standing, alive and bleeding (see Figure 3.12). It is here that the third nostalgic love song "Love Letters" is heard, as Jeffery discovers that Detective Gordon and Don have both received love letters.[102]

Figure 3.12: Jeffery discovers that both Detective Gordon and Don have received "love letters" from Frank.

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[102] Lynch blurs the line between diegetic and nondiegetic music in this scene. There is a radio on in the apartment, but at first, the only thing we can hear is static (Jeffery stops and notices the radio static before entering the room). "Love Letters" begins to play just as Jeffery hears on Detective Gordon's police radio that there is a police raid on Frank's apartment. There are close-up of the radio both with static coming out of it and while the song is playing. Next, we see several images of the police raid on Frank's apartment as the tune continues to play nondiegetically over the montage. After a cut back to Dorothy's apartment, the song continues to play and stops only when Jeffery leaves and shuts the door behind him.

Lynch clearly suggests that his juxtapositions of music and violence are meant to be read as ironic when in an interview he claims that what inspired him to use Orbison's "In Dreams" was the possibility for the main character to twist the meaning. In Frank's hands, a song about love "becomes putrefied to the opposite degree."[103] In fact, the three songs are so easily read as ironic that critics barely take the time to mention them except to point out the multiplicity of meaning their juxtapositions with violence invokes. For example, Charles Drazin remarks, "the way these once-innocent love ballads were refashioned into messages of violence and obsession offered a musical expression of man's dual nature."[104] And in the scene where Frank beats Jeffery, Frank's use of Orbison's lyrics, "In dreams I walk with you/In dreams I talk to you/In dreams you're mine," are for Chion simultaneously read as terrifying, homoerotic, and paternal: "we are alike, you belong to me, you resemble me," and "whatever happens, I will love you and I will never leave you."[105]

One of the reasons music in *A Clockwork Orange* and *Blue Velvet* are so easily read as ironic has to do with the way irony depends on opening gaps between what is said and what is meant, to juxtapose how things are made to appear and how they "really" are. Irony's juxtapositions call attention to

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[103] Rodley, *Lynch on Lynch,* 130.

[104] Charles Drazin, *Charles Drazin on "Blue Velvet,"* Bloomsbury Movie Guide No. 3, (New York: Bloomsbury, 1998), 103.

[105] Chion, *David Lynch,* 96. There is a deleted scene that was to take place after Jeffery's beating by Frank that shows Jeffrey coming to, with his pants around his ankles, and "FUCK YOU" written in lipstick on his legs, implying that he has been raped by one or more of Frank's gang. This deleted scene undoubtedly would have confirmed the homoerotic connection between Frank and Jeffery.

themselves to such an extent that they come to be seen as creative strategies, rather than ways of being. In this sense, an ironic work no longer represents something "real" but is a critique of such "reality". This creates the impression that there is a position outside of that "reality." In other words, reading the juxtaposition between music and violence in *A Clockwork Orange* and *Blue Velvet* as ironic ultimately lets us off the hook: we can view and interpret these dystopian worlds without having to confront them as in any sense "real," as part of our "reality" (*except* in an ironic sense).

Dismissing all readings but ironic ones leads to *The Simpsons* Effect and its crisis of over-ironization. Such readings eliminate the possibility of taking Kubrick's and Lynch's films at face value. That is, they eliminate the possibility of reading the characteristic juxtapositions of these films as artistically "sincere." This is not to deny the insight of ironic readings but to insist that we recover a sincere one as well. I therefore propose to negotiate these two critical moments—irony and sincerity—by drawing on Lacan to understand these juxtapositions as eruptions of the Lacanian object *a*.

A Clockwork Orange and Music As Object *a*

The moral of *A Clockwork Orange* is most often interpreted as a warning against the taking of man's free will, but Gene D. Phillips and Rodney Hill contend that Kubrick's film also has a slightly different message. In their indispensable *Encyclopedia of Stanley Kubrick*, they argue that one of the major thematic points of *A Clockwork Orange* is the film's unrelenting condemnation of fascism in any form. Phillips and Hill identify five narrative segments in *A*

Clockwork Orange: (1) Alex as criminal and free individual, (2) Alex in prison, (3) Alex's treatment, (4) revenge upon Alex, and (5) Alex's reward.[106] They note, however, that Alex is not so much rewarded as he is "paid off" in exchange for his willingness to "go along," to become, if not a "productive" member of society, then, at least a non-disruptive one.[107] Thus, rather than being about the moral quandary of a clockwork orange, the film instead chronicles the ultimately successful, multifaceted, fascistic process of making an "orange" into a "clockwork."[108] Phillips and Hill conclude that the end of the film does not celebrate the return of the "evil" Alex, nor does it trumpet the importance of man's free will; rather it laments the victory of institutional fascism over individual human nature.[109]

The reading of Phillips and Hill is not only applicable to fascism, but to the process of socialization in general. In fact, this notion of an overriding, unstoppable social force that always exacts a price for integration has a correlate in Lacanian psychoanalysis: the Other. As outlined in Chapter One, the Other, at its most basic level is the Lacanian Symbolic—the realm of language. If we examine *A Clockwork Orange* through the lens of Lacanian alienation, we can see that Phillips' and Hill's first narrative segment, "Alex as criminal and free individual," parallels the pre-alienated, pre-subjective position, a natural state of

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[106] Phillips and Hill, *Encyclopedia*, 58.

[107] Ibid., 60.

[108] Alex is transformed into a "clockwork orange," a compliant, mechanical citizen (orange being similar to orangutan, a hairy ape).

[109] Phillips and Hill, *Encyclopedia,* 60.

being where the child does what it wants and takes what it needs without any thought to its cost. As Alex says to his gang at a point when they question his authority: "Have you not everything you need? If you need a motorcar, you pluck it from the trees. If you need pretty polly, you take it." Georgie's responds appropriately: "Brother, you think and talk sometimes like a little child."

The second narrative segment, "Alex in prison," is the moment that Alex is presented with his "forced choice." Alex's "choice" to volunteer for the Ludovico Treatment (the third segment) is the same "choice" that entering the Symbolic requires. In reality, Alex has no choice and must give up his free will; he must be alienated from himself in order to assimilate into society. In the fourth narrative segment, "revenge upon Alex," we see that Alex is severely mistreated even after he "chooses" to accede to society's demand to surrender his violent tendencies. It is at this moment, in Lacanian terms, that Alex is confronted with the overwhelming experience of the Other's desire. It is at this point in the subject's psychological development that the phallic object—the Name-of-the-Father—enters to separate the child from the mOther's overwhelming desire.

It is the Ludovico Treatment in *A Clockwork Orange* that functions as the Name-of-the-Father; it is what instates the Law and prohibits Alex from pursuing enjoyment. At a critical moment during the treatment Alex screams:

> You needn't take it any further, Sir. You've proved to me that all this ultra-violence and killing is wrong, wrong, and terribly wrong. I've learned my lesson, Sir. I see now what I've never seen before. I'm cured, praise God!...I see that it's wrong! It's wrong because it's like against society. It's wrong because everybody has the right to live and be happy without being tolchocked and knifed.

Through the Ludovico Treatment, Alex realizes his own existence outside of the Other. At the moment of separation, Alex is confronted with the traumatic nature of the Other's desire as well as his own lack as an empty signifier. In other words, after the Ludovico Treatment, Alex is no longer violent. He is "a decent a man as you would meet on a May morning … a true Christian, ready to turn the other cheek." Alex became exactly what society demands of him, and yet, he is rebuked and abused. It is this confrontation with his own lack as well as the lack/desire in the Other that forces Alex to realize he is unable to determine (let alone satisfy) the Other's desire. His only recourse is to turn to suicide in an attempt to "snuff it out." In a sense, the Lacanian subject does commit suicide by giving up itself: entering the Symbolic the subject's free will, the subject's "being", is "snuffed out" in exchange for social existence.

There is for Lacan, however, a way around suicide: fantasy and the Lacanian object *a*. "While existence is granted only through the symbolic order (the alienated subject being assigned a place therein), being is supplied only by cleaving to the real."[110] We are now able to understand the significance of Beethoven's Ninth at the end of the film: it is Alex's object *a*. The Ninth is what Alex takes with him after separation; it is a blank screen onto which Alex projects certain fantasies that allow him to stage *jouissance* and regain a sense of "being;" it is the rem(a)inder of his free will and perfect unity with the Other, a unity that was denied him by the Ludovico Treatment. Kubrick literally makes this link between Beethoven's Ninth and Alex's fantasies/enjoyment: at the end of the

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[110] Fink, *The Lacanian Subject,* 61.

film—the moment he is once again able to listen to the Ninth—we see Alex fantasizing of sex with a beautiful (somewhat resistant) female, while a crowd of onlookers (society) cheer and applaud his efforts (see Figure 3.13). We see through Alex's experiences the dual nature of Lacanian *jouissance* as a kind of painful pleasure or pleasure in pain: the Ninth, for Alex, has now taken on this dual nature by being associated with both the painful experience of alienation and the enjoyable fantasies of his pre-alienated state.

Figure 3.13: Alex able to enjoy.

BLUE VELVET AND PHALLIC *JOUISSANCE*

Examining Lynch's *Blue Velvet* through the lens of Lacanian psychoanalysis, we might be tempted to read Frank Booth as a replacement for

Jeffery's incapacitated biological or Symbolic father; a replacement for the Name-of-the-Father, the father figure who prohibits Jeffery from pursuing his enjoyment with Dorothy. While Frank does prohibit Jeffery from pursuing enjoyment, Slavoj Žižek would caution against reading him as the Name-of-the-Father.

Žižek, in "The Art of the Ridiculous Sublime: On David Lynch's *Lost Highway*," discusses three types of fathers. First, the Symbolic Father, the possessor of the Law, the Name-of-the-Father: he is the father who separates the child from the mOther with his prohibitive "No". A second type of father is found in Roberto Benigni's *Life is Beautiful.* Benigni's father, while imprisoned in Auschwitz with his young son during World War II, creates an imaginary scenario where the harsh realities of the camp are presented as a type of game in which one must stick to the rules in order to win. In other words, this Imaginary Father provides a protective fantasy that renders the harsh reality of the camp bearable. A third kind of father is exemplified by the rapist father in Thomas Vinterberg's *Celebration:* a father who indulges in unrestrained violence and incestuous sexual activities. This obscene or Real Father, rather than being a part of the Symbolic, exists outside of and beyond the symbolic Law and, as such, has access to unrestricted, full enjoyment. Fathers like Benigni's protective father and Vinterberg's obscene father appear when the Symbolic Law loses its efficiency due to a breakdown of the paternal function. In other words, these Imaginary and Real Fathers are not substitutes for the Symbolic Father, but are

what remain after the disintegration of the Name-of-the-Father.[111] It is important to note that, in *Blue Velvet*, Jeffery's Imaginary Father (Detective Williams, who tries to shield Jeffery from the harsh realities of Lumberton) and his Real Father (represented by Frank Booth the excessively enjoying Father) appear only after the disintegration of the Name-of-the-Father brought about by the stroke of Jeffery's Symbolic (biological) Father.

All three fathers form a part of the paternal function or what Lacan alternatively refers to as the phallic function. Thus, the Symbolic aspect of the phallus says "No", the Imaginary aspect of the phallus protects the child from the desire of the Other by offering a way out of the inherent deadlock with the mOther, and the Real aspect of the phallus enjoys, since it is the object of desire. The Real father, then, represents that part of the phallic function tied to enjoyment, to what Lacan refers to as a particular type of *jouissance* called phallic *jouissance*, JΦ. Žižek argues, however, that this Real Father's function is not unlike that of the Imaginary Father's in that it too functions as "a fantasy formation, a type of protective shield." But from what does it offer protection? By way of an answer, Žižek provides these rhetorical questions:

> Is the rapist father…not, in spite of his horrifying features, the ultimate guarantee that there is somewhere full, unconstrained enjoyment? And, consequently, what if the true horror is the lack of enjoyment itself?[112]

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[111] Žižek, *The Art of the Ridiculous Sublime*, 28-31.

[112] Ibid.

In other words, when the Symbolic father (the Name-of-the-Father) is absent, the child's source of enjoyment is jeopardized due to the lack of desire in the Other, desire that is usually created by the Father's prohibition. The child, then, creates the fantasy of the obscene father as a guarantor that enjoyment still exists, that it is still possible.

Lynch's juxtaposition of music and violence in *Blue Velvet* appears immediately as the Symbolic begins to disintegrate due the illness of Jeffery's father—a weakening of the Name-of-the-Father. The three main songs in the film become associated with Frank who sticks out as the Real phallus; Frank exists outside the Symbolic, outside of the Law and has access to phallic *jouissance*.[113] In fact, one could say that Frank is only able to stick out and enjoy through an engagement with music, through the combination of violence and the songs "Blue Velvet," "In Dreams," and "Love Letters." Similar to *A Clockwork Orange*, then, music in *Blue Velvet* functions as object *a*, as a blank screen for the projection of fantasies. Specifically, the fantasy of Frank Booth, the Lacanian object Φ, an object that embodies phallic *jouissance* (JΦ) and reassures us that enjoyment still exits even as the Symbolic falls to pieces.

A Lacanian reading of *Blue Velvet* suggests that our psychic economy needs access to a figure like Frank. But irony appears to be a strategy gauged to yield denial. Reading the juxtapositions between Frank and music as ironic may act as a defense that keeps us from having to confront Frank as real; but by reading Frank ironically we lose the one figure who would guarantee *jouissance*

[113] The fact that Frank is outside of the Symbolic may explain why he is able to manipulate and change the meaning of the lyrics, he is outside of language and thus not restricted to its Laws.

in the face of a loss of the Symbolic father. This loss is the actual crisis, the true horror posed by the film: the realization that *jouissance* is not possible!

The lens of Lacanian psychoanalysis allows us to see that the juxtapositions of music and violence in *A Clockwork Orange* and *Blue Velvet* have a purpose beyond the irony that an over-ironized interpretation must automatically read into them. When read *ironically*, these juxtapositions protect us from the dystopian nightmare and allow Kubrick and Lynch to comment on Western culture—ideology as unstoppable and the utopian vision as flawed. However, when the juxtapositions are simultaneously read *sincerely* and mapped onto the Lacanian notion of the Symbolic, we see that music provides a direct link between the subject and *jouissance*. Music in both films becomes the Lacanian object *a*, an empty, meaningless object, a blank screen where protective fantasies are projected, fantasies that ensure, if not enjoyment itself, then, at least the possibility of enjoyment. Additionally, giving Kubrick and Lynch a sincere reading suggests that both Beethoven and 1960s American popular music are capable of occupying the same position in our culture, that both "high" music and "low" music art can occupy the same position within our Symbolic. The reason for this will be discussed at length in Chapter Five.

Music as object *a* likewise exposes music not only as a Symbolic (cultural) object, an object in and of language, of communication, but also as a Real object outside of language and signification. Music as Real object functions like the Hitchcockian MacGuffin in that its primary significance is that it holds

significance for someone else—the Other.[114] The juxtapositions between music and violence discussed above do not function to *create* gaps in signification but rather expose music's *inherent* gaps in signification that ultimately set interpretation in motion.

[114] The Other here is multiple in that it can be a group of peers, a particular culture or simply the artist.

Chapter Four: Traversing the Fantasy and Music Criticism on the *Lost Highway*

The analysis of *A Clockwork Orange* and *Blue Velvet* in the previous chapter showed how it is that music comes to occupy the position of object *a* and how the protective fantasies associated with music as object *a* provide access to *jouissance* – specifically phallic *jouissance* in the case of *Blue Velvet*. A Lacanian reading of *Lost Highway* likewise understands music's position as object *a*. As we will see in this chapter, however, the exact nature of the *jouissance* provided by *Lost Highway* differs significantly from that provided in *Blue Velvet* and has certain psychoanalytical consequences that give the film its particular psychotic feel.

This chapter begins by exploring the relationship between the protective fantasies associated with object *a* and the need for what Lacan calls "traversing of the fantasy." I demonstrate that, left untraversed, fantasies result in crisis. Next, this chapter expands upon Žižek's analysis of *Lost Highway* as an example of the traversing of fantasy, highlighting music's central role in that traversal. Finally, I suggest that the traversal of fantasy is not without risk in that it has certain psychical consequences, which can push the subject into a severe crisis, a crisis that Lacan defines as psychosis. Ultimately, I suggest that the state of psychosis represented in *Lost Highway* has its analogue in the crises of music scholarship and discuss places in our field where tentative steps have been taken to traverse the fantasy.

WHY THE NEED TO TRAVERSE THE FANTASY?

In Lacanian psychoanalysis, fantasy is not conceived of in the traditional sense—as a *realization* of the subject's desires. Recall from Chapter One in our brief introduction of Lacan, the Lacanian subject although split (from themselves through alienation, and from the Other through separation) is able to ignore its division through the fantasies associated with object *a*. In other words, through fantasy, the subject achieves a phantasmatic sense of wholeness, completeness, fulfillment, and well-being. That is precisely what Lacan means by fantasy, and he formalizes it with the mathme $\$ \lozenge a$, which is to be read: fantasy is the divided subject ($) in relation to object *a*. Thus, fantasy is not seen as a *realization* of the subject's desires, but rather, an answer to the subject's *impossible relation* to object *a*.

According to Lacanian psychoanalysis the subject, when confronted with object *a* and the gaps in signification it represents, turns to fantasy in to answer the question "What does it mean?" Žižek often provides the case of anti-Semitism as an example of how ideological fantasy serves to fill in these gaps: for the Nazis, the answer to "What does the Jew want?" is a fantasy of "Jewish conspiracy": to the anti-Semite, Jews possess a mysterious power to manipulate events, to pull strings behind the scenes. The crucial point Žižek makes here is that fantasy functions as a construction, as an imaginary scenario filling out the void, the opening of the desire of the Other. By giving us a definite answer to the question "What does the Other want?" fantasy enables us to evade the unbearable deadlock in which the Other wants something from us, but, like the

anti-Semite, we are at the same time incapable of translating this desire of the Other into a positive interpellation, into a mandate with which to identify.[115]

These fantasies associated with the Lacanian object *a* are at the same time a solution and new problem for the subject. Fantasies are constructed in a way that satisfies the desire of the Other (demonstrated at the end of *A Clockwork Orange* by the applauding crowd surrounding Alex's sexual act). The problem, Lacan argued, is that there is no guarantee that what is satisfying to the Other is also what provides enjoyment for the subject; object *a* at any moment may become a disgusting and repulsive object.

Another problem is that the Other's desire is constantly shifting—desire is always directed towards something that one does not possess—making it impossible for the subject to pin down what it is that the Other desires. This sends the subject into a constant search for what it is that the Other wants, generating multiple and inconsistent fantasies in a constant quest to become what it is that the Other desires, to become the object of the Other's *jouissance*.

These problems are experienced with music as object *a* and are evident in the crises of The Ministry of Truth and The Tower of Babel. First, there is the ideological construction of "truth" in the Ministry that serves to answer the question of the Other's desire. This construction is not necessarily based on any real "truth" but rather simply needs to be coherent in order to stitch up the inconsistencies in a particular ideology. But there is also the fragmentation of the Tower of Babel produced by the generation of multiple and inconsistent

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[115] Žižek, *The Sublime Object,* 114-15.

interpretations in hopes of answering the constantly shifting question of "What does it mean?" These problems cycle back and forth, fragmentation leading to the need for coherency and back again until the subject eventually arrives at a point of frustration in the realization that the question may never be answered, indeed that it is no longer clear even what the question asks (*The Simpsons* Effect).

It is the goal of Lacanian psychoanalysis to help analysands (subjects who are undergoing psychoanalytical treatment) through these problems, not only by helping them interpret (talk about) their symptoms (helping them answer the question "What does it mean?"), but also by exposing the Real kernel of the symptom in order to gain a new perspective on the Other's desire and to traverse their protective fantasies.[116] *Lost Highway* provides a brilliant example of how the fantasies associated with music as object *a* are traversed and the psychical side-effects of this crucial though extremely difficult psychoanalytical step.

MUSIC'S ROLE IN TRAVERSING THE *LOST HIGHWAY*

Lost Highway is the most bizarre and confusing of the three films. Therefore, it is hardly surprising that it was the least successful both critically and financially.[117] One reason for the confusion is a split in the film's plot: about

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[116] The notions of symptom and object *a* are often interchangeable in Lacan's work. He usually preferred the idea of symptom to that of object *a*. Paul Verhaeghe and Frédéric Declercq, "Lacan's Analytic Goal: Le *sinthome* or the Feminine Way," in *Re-Inventing the Symptom: Essays on the Final Lacan,* ed., Luke Thurston, Contemporary Theory Series, ed., Frances Restuccia, (New York: Other Press, 2002), 66.

[117] *Lost Highway* opened on February 21, 1997 and had fallen off the radar by April with a final US gross of $3.57 million. This was devastatingly disappointing given that October Films reportedly paid $10 million for the North American distribution rights. David Hughes, *The Complete Lynch,* (London: Virgin 2001), 221.

a third of the way through the movie, most of the characters disappear and new characters are introduced, even though we seem to be watching the same story.

Lost Highway has been the subject of a variety of readings; however, few have engaged the soundtrack beyond a basic description of how Lynch's blurring of sound effects and music affect the images. Lynch himself has commented that he treats music as just "another sound effect"[118] and loves to "push the pressure" in a scene by sending a lot of stuff to the subwoofer.[119] Greg Hainge comments on how *Lost Highway's* soundscapes primarily function to intensify the specular spaces created by "Lynch's frequent use of extremely low lighting or absolute blackness" where "it is almost as though the image coming from the projector is absorbed by the screen rather than being reflected back to the audience."[120] Beyond such comments, actual discussions of music in the film usually revolve around where Lynch got the idea to use the music.

Lost Highway opens with jazz saxophonist Fred Madison (Bill Pullman) sitting on his bed smoking a cigarette. The intercom buzzes and as he answers, he hears the meaningless phrase "Dick Laurent is dead." Fred's wife is the beautiful, but cold and unfaithful brunette Renee (Patricia Arquette). Fred and Renee have several problems including an anemic sexual relationship, mysterious videotapes that keep showing up on their doorstep, and a pale-faced

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[118] Rodley, *Lynch on Lynch,* 242.

[119] Ibid., 227.

[120] Greg Hainge, "Weird or Loopy? Specular Spaces, Feedback and Artifice in *Lost Highway's* Aesthetics of Sensation," in *The Cinema of David Lynch: American dreams, Nightmare Visions,* ed. Erica Sheen and Annette Davison, Directors' Cuts Series, (New York: Wallflower Press, 2004), 138.

Mystery Man (Robert Blake) who seems to be following Fred. Fred eventually kills his wife, after which he is sent to prison where he transforms into a completely different person, a young mechanic named Pete Dayton (Balthazar Getty).

Since Pete is obviously not Fred, he is released from prison and we see him resume his life as a mechanic at Arty's Garage. It is here that Pete meets a mobster-like character named Mr. Eddy (a.k.a. Dick Laurent played by Robert Loggia) and his blonde mistress Alice (also played by Patricia Arquette). Pete and Alice start an affair behind Mr. Eddy's back and eventually rob and kill a porn king named Andy to get money that will allow them to escape. Pete and Alice drive to a desert cabin where the two of them passionately make love: when Pete pleads "I want you, Alice, " she whispers her response—"You'll never have me!"—into his ear, after which she disappears into the darkness. At this moment, Pete transforms back into Fred, who kidnaps and murders Mr. Eddy. Fred returns to the city and delivers the message "Dick Laurent is dead" on the intercom of his own house and drives again into the desert with the police in hot pursuit.

If this synopsis seems confusing, that is because the film itself is confusing. It is nearly impossible to delineate a linear narrative. Žižek claims, however, that it is the opposition between the two couples that provides the key to following the film's plot: first, there is the "normal" couple, the impotent Fred and his reserved and unfaithful wife Renee. According to Žižek, after Fred kills (or fantasizes about killing) Renee, we are transported into the second part of the film with the younger virile Pete who is coupled with the sexually aggressive

Alice, with the addition of Mr. Eddy as an intervening obstacle to the couple's happiness. The relationship of Fred and Renee is doomed for internal reasons, while the second relationship is doomed for external reasons.[121] Žižek argues:

> The key point here is that, in this displacement from reality to fantasized *noir* universe, the status of the obstacle changes… [I]sn't this move from inherent impossibility to external obstacle the very definition of fantasy, of the fantasmatic object in which the inherent deadlock acquires positive existence, with the implication that, with this obstacle cancelled, the relationship will run smoothly?[122]

According to Žižek, the two parts of the film are the opposition of reality and fantasy. Through the staging of this opposition, Lynch successfully tears apart our "normal sense of reality" where reality and fantasy work together (vertically), fantasy always supporting reality. In doing so he leaves us in a situation where reality and fantasy are presented separate from each other (horizontally).[123]

The soundtrack for *Lost Highway* is structured by two important categories: music represented by actual songs and musical sound effects consisting of various instrumental sounds (i.e., low, almost inaudible pedal tones; ascending string glissandos; short atonal motifs; and various percussive noises). Lynch's emphasis on sound and music, as was discussed at the beginning of Chapter One, suggests that important interpretive clues may lie within the film's soundtrack. As it turns out, the soundtrack supports Žižek's

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[121] Žižek, *The Art of the Ridiculous Sublime,* 16.

[122] Ibid.

[123] Ibid., 21.

reading of the film. The first half of the film—representing reality void of fantasy—is, with the exception of a few instances of music that will be discussed below, completely devoid of all music. In fact, in this part of the film the soundtrack consists primarily of dialogue, which is broken occasionally by musical sound effects, most obviously in those instances where the Lacanian Real is felt; these are the places where the subject would normally call upon fantasy to act as a defense against the Real: the playing of each of the three videotapes, the failed attempt at sex with Renee, and the meeting with Mystery Man. Actual music, on the other hand, is present almost exclusively throughout the fantasy half of the film and most obviously in those instances that are the most fantasmatic. For example, Antônio Carlos Jobim's "Insensatez" plays when we get our first good look at Pete who is relaxing in the backyard complete with swimming pool and white-picket fence (see Figure 4.1). Lou Reed's version of "This Magic Moment" plays when Pete first sees Alice (see Figure 4.2). Mr. Eddie, the fantasized external obstacle to Pete and Alice's relationship, has his own cool jazzy themes that accelerate when he get irritated and slow when he regains his cool (see Figure 4.3). And we hear the aggressive "Hierate Mich" and "Rammstein" by the German "dance-metal" band Rammstein when Pete and Alice arrive at Andy's house—the ultimate place of fantasy (see Figure 4.4). Thus, the presence of musical effects and music maps perfectly onto Žižek's reality/fantasy reading of the film (see Table 4.1 for a listing of occurrences and timings for music in *Lost Highway*).

Time	Music	Scene
0:00—2:30	"I'm Deranged" by David Bowie.	Opening Credits.
6:38—7:26	"Red Bats With Teeth" by Angelo Badalamenti.	Fred playing the saxophone at the Luna Lounge.
14:52—15:19	"Song to the Siren" by This Mortal Coil	Fred and Renee attempt sex.
27:04—28:50 and again at 31:20—32:52	"Something Wicked This Way Comes" by Barry Adamson.	Fred and Renee at Andy's House. Music stops when Mystery Man enters, begins again when he leaves.
48:13—48:48	"Song to the Siren" by This Mortal Coil	Fred begins to turn into Pete.
50:18	**Film splits, Fred turns into Pete.**	
54:56—56:50	"Insensatez" by Antônio Carlos Jobim's.	Pete in the backyard.
57:47—58:40	"Eye" by The Smashing Pumpkins	Pete dancing with Shelia.
1:00:02—1:07:44	"Mr. Eddy's Theme 1" and "Mr. Eddy's Theme 2" by Barry Adamson.	Mr. Eddy takes Pete for a ride.
1:08:16—1:11:33	"Dub Driving" by Angelo Badalamenti.	Pete and Sheila make love.
1:11:33—1:11:59	"Red Bats With Teeth."	Pete changes radio in the garage.
1:13:22—1:14:48	"This Magic Moment" by Lou Reed.	Pete sees Alice for the first time.
1:14:48—1:21:00	"Hollywood Sunset" by Angelo Badalamenti.	Alice picks up Pete after work; they make love at several hotels.
1:20:03—1:24:07	"Apple Of Sodom" by Marilyn Manson.	Pete rushes has sex with Sheila.
1:31:32—1:34:03	"I Put A Spell On You" by Marilyn Manson.	Alice is forced to perform for Mr. Eddy.
1:42:03—1:42:33	"Heirate Mich" by Rammstein	Pete enters Andy's house.
1:46:27—1:47:26	"Rammstein" by Rammstein	Pete after Andy is killed.
1:52:59—1:55:23	"Song to the Siren" by This Mortal Coil	Pete and Alice make love.
2:01:09—2:02:20	"Rammstein."	Fred Kidnaps Mr. Eddy
2:04:09—2:04:57	"Heirate Mich."	Fred kills Mr. Eddy
2:08:17—2:09:34	"Driver Down" by Trent Reznor	Police chase Fred into the desert.
2:09:46—2:13:30	"I'm Deranged" by David Bowie.	End Credits.

Table 4.1: Timings for music in *Lost Highway*.[124]

[124] David Lynch, *Lost Highway*, 1997, 129 min., October Films, 2007, DVD.

Figure 4.1: "Insensatez," Pete (Balthazar Getty) relaxes in the back yard.

Figure 4.2: "This Magic Moment," Alice (Patricia Arquette) appears.

Figure 4.3: Mr. Eddy (Robert Loggia) out for a joy ride with Pete.

Figure 4.4: "Hierate Mich," A pornographic movie of Alice is projected onto the wall behind Pete at Andy's house.

The few instances where music occurs in the "reality" world can all be tied to the fantasy world. The first takes place at a jazz club where Fred improvises a saxophone solo against a steady grove played by a small jazz ensemble (Badalamenti's "Red Bats with Teeth," see Figure 4.5). The solo starts out as a kind of modern jazz solo and it is here that we see Fred fantasizing about Renee leaving the club with another man (Andy).[125] As Fred fantasizes, he quickly shifts to the highest altissimo register of the saxophone and the music becomes so disjointed—tonally blurred and out of tempo—that the ensemble stops playing. Fred, however, continues to squawk out an intense solo seemingly oblivious to the fact that he is playing alone. In this scene, music (fantasy) is seemingly trying to break through, but Fred literally destroys the music, turning it into a kind of sound effect, returning the scene back to the reality world. This reading is strengthened when, later in the fantasy half of the film, Pete hears the same squawking saxophone from "Red Bats with Teeth" being played on the radio in the garage where he works. He slowly gets up, goes over to the radio and changes the station to some softer music claiming that he "just didn't like it." With this, Pete (from the fantasy world) effectively shuts out reality choosing instead the protection of fantasy, and it is at precisely this moment that Alice appears.

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[125] This tying of fantasy with Fred's solo actually occurs a few scenes later when we see images of Fred's soloing mixed with images of Renee leaving the bar with another man (Andy).

Figure 4.5: Fred (Bill Pullman) plays "Bats With Red Teeth" at the Luna Lounge.

These are not the only instances where one world tries to invade the other. Pete's fantasy world begins to fall apart when Alice calls to inform him that they cannot meet because Mr. Eddy is getting suspicious. At that moment we get the typical Lynchian glimpses of the Real—spiders crawling up a wall and moths dying in a light fixture. The sound accompanying this scene is dominated by musical sound effects and once again, it is Pete that effectively holds back reality by rushing out and having sex with his old girlfriend Sheila. Once he does, the musical sound effects are replaced by Marilyn Manson's "Apple of Sodom."

Likewise, the second instance of music in the reality world occurs when Fred and Renee attempt sex. We begin to hear This Mortal Coil's "Song to the Siren," but the song is cut off and replace by musical sound effects when Fred is unable to perform sexually; in other words, when Fred is confronted with the

reality that he is unable to satisfy Renee's desire. The use of "Song to the Siren" to start the transformation from Fred in the reality world, to Pete in the Fantasy world, confirms that the song is tied to fantasy.

The final instance of actual music in the reality world occurs when Fred and Renee attend a party at Andy's house. Here, Barry Adamson's "Something Wicked This Way Comes" is heard playing diegetically at the party, showing that it belongs to Andy's house. Since this house represents the furthest extent of fantasy in the second part of the film, it is understandable that the presence of music here should foreshadow the fantasy world. Moreover, the music at Andy's house stops at the precise moment when the Mystery Man confronts Fred and is replaced by musical effects; the music picks up again when Mystery Man leaves (see Figure 4.6).

Figure 4.6: The Mystery Man (Robert Blake) confronts Fred at Andy's house.

As was the case in *Blue Velvet*, the parallels between Lynch's use of music and Žižek's analysis point to music functioning as the Lacanian object *a*, a blank screen for the projection of Fred's protective fantasies. These fantasies, which protect Fred from facing his own inadequacies, are arguably a projection of how Fred sees himself; or, more precisely, how Fred thinks the Other would like to see him: as the younger, virile Pete, who in the words of one of the detectives, "gets more pussy than a toilet seat." But, whereas music in *Blue Velvet* protected the subject by providing a glimpse of phallic *jouissance,* thus ensuring the existence of enjoyment, Fred's desire is to become the phallus, the object that provides the Other's enjoyment. The protective fantasies associated with music in *Lost Highway* literally stage the Other's desire in order to answer the unbearable question of "What does the Other want?" The ability to provide an answer to this question of the Other's desire (albeit through fantasy) provides access to the mode of *jouissance* known as the *jouissance* of the Other: JA. The *jouissance* of the Other, however, is not the only type of enjoyment provided by fantasy. There is also *jouis-sens* or the enjoyment in the construction of meaning, the *jouissance* obtained by making sense of the Other's desire and answering the question: "What does the Other want?"[126]

As we see in the film, however, Fred's fantasy world cannot sustain itself and eventually begins to fall apart. This disintegration of the fantasy world is a direct result of the elusive nature of the Other's desire and the dual nature of

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[126] It is evident that *jouis-sens* in this case is completely involved with the Other, with the *jouissance* of the Other. We will see in the next chapter that there is in fact another type of *jouis-sens,* one that is free from the Other.

jouissance obtained through fantasy. The result of the collapse of Fred's fantasy world is that he no longer able to stage the *jouissance* of the Other and he is again confronted with the overwhelming question of the Other's desire. According to Lacanian psychoanalysis, it is crucial to deal with the fantasies associated with object *a* in a positive way by penetrating them to their core. Lacan refers to this step as "traversing the fantasy." Žižek explains,

> we must accomplish the crucial step of going through the fantasy, of obtaining distance from it, of experiencing how the fantasy-formation just masks, fills out a certain void, lack, empty place in the other.[127]

Returning to Žižek's example of anti-Semitism, we can understand that traversing the fantasy of a Jewish conspiracy would be equivalent to an acceptance of the conspiracy as nothing other than a fantasy, a fantasy that fills the gap in signification.

The accomplishment of Lynch's *Lost Highway*, according to Žižek, is that Lynch, through the film's split and the separation of fantasy from reality, successfully traverses the fantasy. In *Lost Highway,* Lynch

> traverses the fantasmatic universe of noir, not by way of direct social criticism (depicting a grim social reality behind it), but by staging its fantasies openly, more directly, i.e., without the secondary perlaborations which masks their inconsistencies.[128]

From the perspective of the crisis in the discourse on music, *Lost Highway* is particularly interesting because it stages the traversal of fantasy, the extraction of

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[127] Žižek, *The Sublime Object,* 74.

[128] Žižek, *The Art of the Ridiculous Sublime,* 41.

fantasy from our normal "sense of reality," on the ground of music. The second part of *Lost Highway* is nothing less than the exposure of music as object *a*, revealing how music functions as a blank screen for the projection of fantasies that stage the *jouissance* of the Other and simultaneously provide the subject with *jouis-sens*, the enjoyment-of-making-sense of the Other's desire. This experiencing of how the fantasy-formation simply masks and fills out a void or certain lack is the very definition of traversing the fantasy.

A FAILURE OF THE SYMBOLIC AND PSYCHOSIS: MUSIC CRITICISM ON THE *LOST HIGHWAY*

In his seminar R.S.I. (1975-76), Lacan links object *a* to his concept of the "Letter." The letter is the drive-related, non-semiotized kernel of the signifier, whereas the signifier is a letter that has already been incorporated into the Symbolic. Lacan identifies the letter or object *a* with the what he calls the master signifier, S_1, on the condition that this S_1 is understood as disconnected from S_2, the battery of other signifiers. The letter S_1 is only turned into a signifier when connected to S_2.[129]

Lacan theorized that patients come to the analyst because they are convinced that their symptom (S_1, object *a*, the letter)[130] has a meaning (S_2). The analyst is thereby put in the position of the Other, the "Subject Supposed to Know", the one who will reveal the hidden signification. Simply put, the patient

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[129] Verhaeghe and Declercq, "Lacan's Analytic Goal," 67.

[130] Again, the Lacanian ideas of symptom, object *a,* S_1, and phallus are often interchangeable.

lets the symptom be followed by an ellipsis (…), hoping that it will receive a meaning during the analysis. The subject explores all the possible meanings, searching for one the analyst will affirm as the answer to the symptom.[131] But, even if the analyst provides this affirmation, the subject's symptom is sure to persist, necessitating the need for yet another S_2. Eventually, the accumulation of S_2s becomes so multiple and inconsistent that the subject is confronted with the likelihood that the meaning behind the symptom may not exist. This realization that it is all meaningless—that every S_2 is fantasy, that all meaning is relative—is the subject's traversing of fantasy and the very experience of the crisis at the foot of the Tower of Babel: the dichotomy of all or nothing. The traversing of fantasy creates a condition where the subject may begin to question the validity of the Symbolic itself. This provokes a weakening of the Symbolic, a crisis in the Symbolic that Lacan characterizes as psychosis.

Recall that in normal reality, the Lacanian orders of RSI are tied together during the process of alienation into the formation known as a Borromean knot, the three orders interact and balance each other. Originally, Lacan theorized that psychosis occurs when the subject does not go through alienation, when the Name-of-the-Father is foreclosed; therefore, the Symbolic is never instated, and the three Orders do not get properly knotted together. But later in his career, Lacan believed that psychosis could appear in ways other than a failure of alienation. According to Lacan, a patient could experience psychosis if RSI were

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[131] Verhaeghe and Declercq, "Lacan's Analytic Goal," 67-68.

to become unknotted through some failure of the Symbolic.[132] A subject who has traversed the fantasy and begins to question the validity of the Symbolic experiences just such a failure. For this subject, the Symbolic begins to collapse, RSI unravels, and psychosis becomes possible if not likely.

If we interpret Fred, Pete, and Mystery Man as three separate versions of the same character, *Lost Highway* actually stages such an unraveling of RSI. In this reading, Fred is the Symbolic version, Pete the Imaginary version, and Mystery Man the Real version of the main character. This unraveling explains the psychotic feel of *Lost Highway*. Indeed, the multiple story lines, the characters' ability to shift from one story line to the next, to appear and disappear with ease (much like an schizophrenic hallucinations), has led to *Lost Highway* being described as a psychogentic fugue, a term that combines the ideas of psychosis and contrapuntal music.[133]

Additionally, we can look back and apply this diagnosis of psychosis (the unraveling of RSI) to *Blue Velvet*, where we experienced three separate versions of the Father. There, the Imaginary and Real fathers (Detective Williams and Frank Booth) only appeared after the weakening of Jeffery's Symbolic (biological) father. In other words, the unraveling of RSI occurs in *Blue Velvet*, as it does in *Lost Highway*, through a crisis of the Symbolic.

I contend that the institutions of music scholarship are struggling with a similar unraveling of RSI and that *The Simpsons* Effect, described in Chapter Two,

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[132] Evans, *An Introductory Dictionary,* 20 and 155.

[133] Rodley, *Lynch on Lynch,* 238-39.

is similar to the state of psychosis produced by a failure of the musical Symbolic. The Tower of Babel opens up the possibility of this failure of the musical Symbolic once the subject acknowledges that beneath the vast accumulation of interpretation, music is just a void. Likewise the Ministry of Truth produces a failure of the musical Symbolic when all meaning is seen as constructed and false. These equate to a traversal of music meaning as fantasy. Indeed, the evidence that music discourse has traversed the fantasy lies in Burnham's labeling of Beethoven's music as a "blank flag," an object that acts as a screen on which to project (construct) our ideological fantasies. Burnham's recognition of this trend in the work of Solie, Cook, and Eichhorn suggests that music scholarship has begun to traverse the fantasies associated with music as object *a*. But the traversal has just begun, and the possibility of severe, even psychotic regression remains. Here is the good news: Lacan theorized that such psychosis could be avoided by constructing a fourth ring to re-knot RSI, obtaining a kind of supplemental Borromean consistency between the three orders. We will explore how we might accomplish this in the chapters that follow.

Chapter Five: *Mulholland Drive* and Music as *Sinthome*

This chapter addresses the crisis of the Symbolic left in the wake of the traversing of fantasy and argues that Lynch's *Mulholland Drive* provides a model for working through this crisis in a non-pathological way. I begin by showing how the traversing of fantasy, the recognition that nothing but a void lies at the center of fantasy, is in itself just another layer of fantasy, one specifically created to justify and ensure the position of object *a*. This means that a further step in the psychoanalytic process is needed. Lacan referred to this step as "identifying with the *sinthome*." After explaining the notion of *sinthome*, I show how music in *Mulholland Drive* at first functions like the music in *Lost Highway* in that it provides a screen for the projection of fantasy and how Lynch, once again, uses music to separate reality and fantasy. I argue that a dramatic revelation at the end of the film transforms the significance of music in *Mulholland Drive* so that it ceases to function as object *a* and takes on the role of the Lacanian *sinthome*. Finally, I show how Lynch's transformation of music from object *a* to *sinthome* masters the crisis of the Symbolic by adopting a different stance towards the Other and repositioning *jouis-sens*.

So far I have used Lynch's films to show how music can serve to articulate the crisis of the Symbolic. In *Blue Velvet* music functions as the phallus Φ, an object that sticks out and provides a glimpse of JΦ. In that respect it is a protective fantasy that arises when the Symbolic begins to deteriorate. Indeed, the excessive, idiotic violence that accompanies the fantasy reassures the subject that somewhere, full and unrestrained *jouissance* must ex-sist in the midst of the

Symbolic crisis. Irony becomes the dominant strategy for containing the excesses the crisis of the Symbolic because it suppresses this knowledge, thereby refusing to accept the fantasy as one's own. *The Simpsons* Effect is the name of this particular response to the crisis of the Symbolic.

In *Lost Highway*, music functions as the stage of the Other's *jouissance* (JA) providing the subject with a delusional form of *jouis-sens* when the Other's desires are momentarily pinned down. But the Other's *jouissance* is always shifting and there is no guarantee that what provides enjoyment for the Other will also provide enjoyment for the subject. In fact, the subject may very well find it repulsive. Eventually, the subject's fantasies become so multiple and inconsistent that the subject arrives at the crisis point of all-or-nothing. In other words, the subject is no longer able to stage the *jouissance* of the Other. Additionally, the subject longer finds *jouis-sens* in the construction of fantasies because their inconsistencies expose them as delusional and constructed for them by the Other. The Tower of Babel and the Ministry of Truth are the names of these particular responses to the crisis of the Symbolic and it becomes necessary to get beyond and traverse the fantasies that once staged the Other's *jouissance* and provided the subject with *jouis-sens*.

In both films, music relates to the three modes of *jouissance* in the role of the Lacanian object *a*. Music's inherent blankness, its ability to reflect projections of fantasy, makes it particularly suited to playing this role. But that blankness also binds it to the crises of the Symbolic, giving rise to fantasy and the troubling psychic responses to music as object *a*.

BLANKNESS OF OBJECT *A* AS JUST ANOTHER LAYER OF FANTASY

Anyone coming into contact with Lacanian psychoanalysis for the first time will quickly notice that object *a* plays a central role in Lacan's work but that the exact nature of object *a* is to hard to pin down and seems to take many forms—reminder, remainder, blank screen, symptom, object-cause, and so forth. One reason object *a* assumes so many guises in the theory is that there is nothing inherent in an object that destines it to become the "object-cause of desire." Rather, object *a* can be *any* object "elevated to the dignity of the Thing"—the Freudian *das Ding,* the impossible-unattainable substance of enjoyment; it is, as Žižek explains, "an ordinary, everyday object that undergoes a kind of transubstantiation and starts to function, for the subject, as an embodiment of the impossible Thing."[134] In other words, something becomes object *a* not because of any natural attribute, but simply because it occupies a particular place in the Symbolic, in the reality formed by discourse.

In his example of anti-Semitism, Žižek suggests that for the anti-Semite, Jews assume the place of object *a*. But there is nothing inherent in the character of Jews that would make them naturally inclined to assume the position of the object-cause of desire. As he notes, Jews "do not posses any special qualities, they are just average people, no more or less corrupted than anyone else."[135] In other words, the Jews do not acquire their status as object *a* because they stick out or because they have no identity (in reality they are like any other group of

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[134] Slavoj Žižek, *Looking Awry: An Introduction to Jacques Lacan Through Popular Culture,* October Book Series, (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 1991), 83.

[135] Žižek, *The Sublime Object,* 115.

people), but simply because, for reasons quite arbitrary (if also historically contingent), they have been placed into a particular position in discourse. The anti-Semitic idea of "Jews" has nothing to do with the people the discourse designates.[136] Rather, anti-Semitism serves to stitch up the inconsistency of a particular ideological system, a fantasy to justify placing them in the position of object *a*, creating an external excuse for the ideology's inherent impossibilities. Traversing the fantasy of anti-Semitism allows us to recognize that the object *a* is itself not a void, but that it fills in a void, compensates for a particular lack—the Fascist ideology as inherently (and pathologically) flawed.

It is much the same for all ideologies, and our reading of music as object *a* is no exception. In other words, it is through the traversing of the fantasy that musical meaning is exposed as nothing more than a matter of discourse. But it is also nothing less; or, to put it another way, that meaning is more than nothing: to suggest that discourse determines meaning because the object it discusses is meaningless, is but another layer of fantasy, one that evades discursive consequences of the discourse it would negate. Thus, the blankness of music in general and, for specific historically contingent reasons, of Beethoven in particular, is nothing more than another layer of fantasy meant to justify music's position as object *a*.[137] Lacan recognized that these type of fantasies were not

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[136] Indeed, in another ideological context, object *a* might well be, say, "Illegal Immigrants," "Capitalists," or "Liberals."

[137] Likewise, the figure of Beethoven—the myth of his music that subsumes the person who is just like other people—is a figure of suture, one that stitches up the inconsistencies in the ideology of freedom. The anecdote of the title page of the Eroica, Beethoven's striking of the dedication to Napoleon (in other words, the heroic absenting of discursive determinations in the name of freedom), is a good illustration of this.

only meant to justify the position of object *a,* but also functioned to secure its position for the future. Burnham's blank flag and Adorno's claim that the absolute nothingness in Beethoven's music expresses absolute freedom in negative form are therefore elaborate fantasies that serve both to justify Beethoven's position as object *a,* as well as, to ensure that we can hold onto our utopian ideology (absolute freedom in the case of Adorno) without ever having to confront the possibility that it does not exist (ex-sist). The reason Burnham's blank flag (i.e., the traversing of the fantasy) does not solve our Symbolic crisis but actually only returns to the crisis of the Symbolic—perhaps in the form of psychosis—is that in reality, it is just another layer of fantasy that must be traversed. That is why Lacan eventually theorized a final step in the analytical process and a way for the subject to avoid psychosis.

After traversing the fantasy the subject is presented with a choice. The subject may conclude that all meaning is relative, that everything is fantasy. As we have seen, this creates a crisis of the Symbolic: RSI becomes unknotted, which throws the subject into a state of psychosis. The subject, however, has another choice. Rather than taking the stance that meaning does not exist, the subject can choose to acknowledge that meaning may exist, but that the Other does not have access to it anymore than the subject; in other words, the subject can acknowledge that the Other *does not* know all. The Other is itself incomplete and lacking, split just like the subject.[138] For Lacan, such recognition, what he calls the identification with the *sinthome*, is the final step of the analytical process.

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[138] This realization that the Other is lacking was experienced during alienation, during the moment when the child notices that the mOther is not there, that the mOther desires something

WHAT IS *SINTHOME*?

This strange term, according to Lacan, is an "old way of writing what was later written symptom."[139] Lacan does not systematically differentiate symptom from *sinthome*. In fact, he uses the terms interchangeably, the major difference being one of chronology. The term *sinthome* perhaps reflects a different understanding of what he had earlier called "symptom," the shift in terminology emphasizing a more radical way of conceiving the nature of the signifier's relation to the Symbolic.[140]

Psychoanalytical theory (including early Lacan) traditionally associates art with the Freudian concept of sublimation: art is nothing more than an activity meant to express the drives in a socially acceptable way. In other words, sublimation understands art as a displacement, a substitution of one term (art) for a second repressed term (the drives). Sublimation is sometimes also called a conversion symptom, since, according to the theory, the symptom could be lifted if the repressed was exposed (through the talking cure). Ultimately, the concept of sublimation did not conform with the theory Lacan developed around the Borromean knot. The *sinthome* was his solution to this difficulty.

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outside the child. The lack in the mOther in that case is associated with desire and the child creates the fantasy of the phallus to fill the gap, while here, fantasy has run its course and the lack in the Other is associated with knowledge: the "mOther does not have all" is now experienced as the "Other does not know all."

[139] Jacques Lacan, *Le Seminaire XXIII: Le sinthome* (1971-1972), unpublished, lesson of 2/9/72; sited in Hoens and Pluth, "The *sinthome*," 1.

[140] Hoens and Pluth "The *sinthome*," 2.

Lacan conceived the *sinthome* as a fourth ring in the Borromean knot. For some subjects, the three rings of the Borromean knot are badly knotted from the start, and a fourth ring, that of the *sinthome*, is necessary to ensure that the knot holds. Lacan used the writings of James Joyce to develop the term.[141] Joyce, Lacan said, used his art to repair a failure of the Borromean consistency of the knot that allowed it to come undone in a particular way. In Joyce's case, Lacan claimed, there was a failure at the point where R (Real) is supposed to pass under S (Symbolic) and instead R passes over S, this links R and S together, leaving I (Imaginary) loosely wedged in between (see Figure 5.1). Lacan realized that Joyce's writing acted as a suture connecting R and S a second time, which locks I into place and keeps it from slipping out (see Figure 5.2).

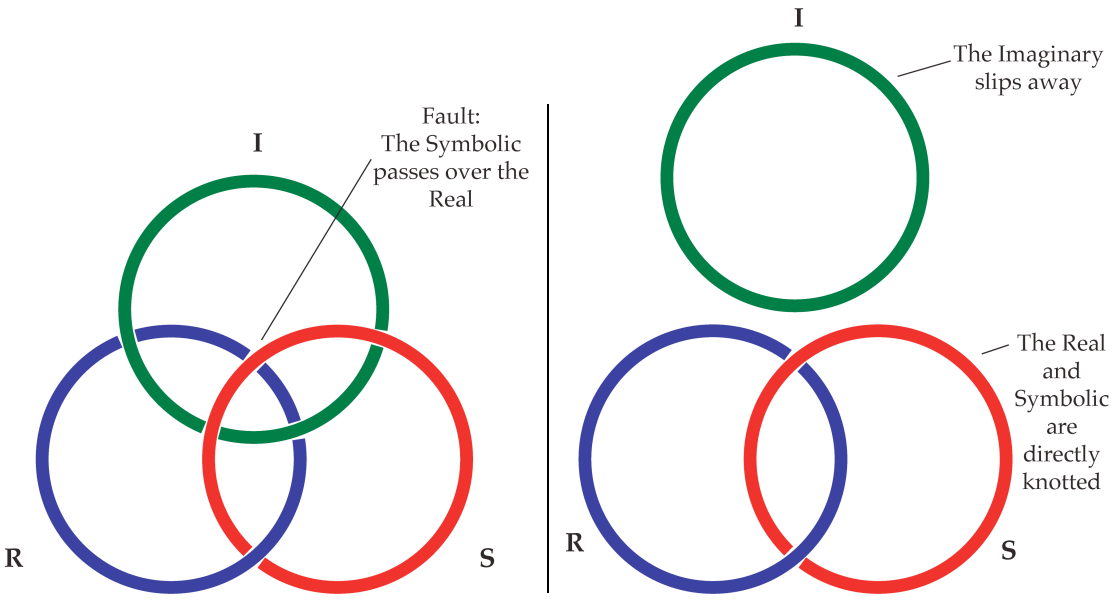

Figure 5.1: Joyce's knot before construction of the *sinthome*; Real and Symbolic are connected; I is loosely wedged in between, free to slip away.

[141] Dravers, "Joyce & the *Sinthome*," 4.

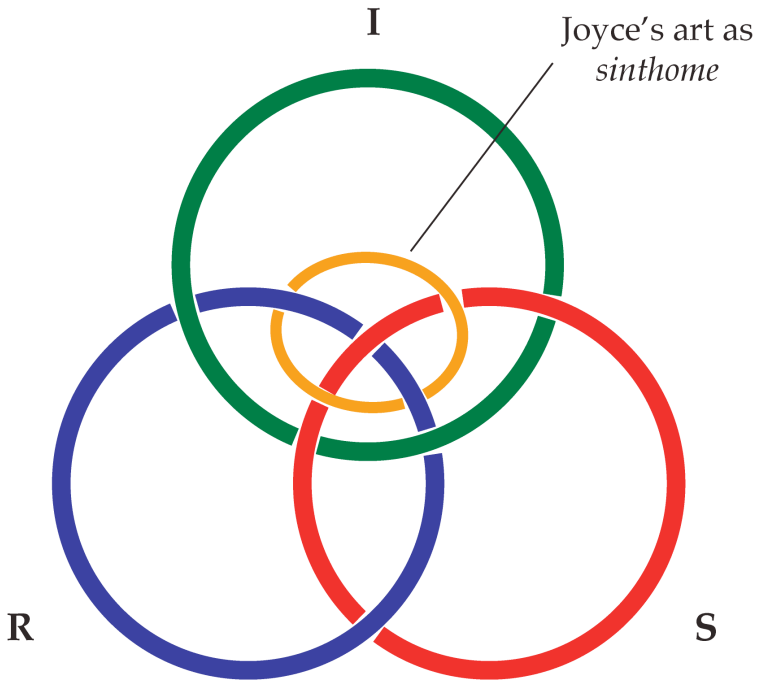

Figure 5.2: Joyce's Solution, the *sinthome* repairs the fault, re-knotting RSI.[142]

What does it mean, then, to identify with one's *sinthome*? According to Verhaeghe and Declercq the concept is best understood by comparing it with its opposite: to believe in one's symptom. A subject can choose either an *identification with,* or a *belief in*. To believe in one's symptom consists in adding the ellipsis (…) to the letter: S_1… To believe in the symptom is to believe in the existence of a final signifier, S_2, to reveal the ultimate signification and sense of S_1. The condition for this is the existence of a guarantee that the Other has no

[142] Figures 5.1 and 5.2 are derived from Dravers, "Joyce & the *Sinthome*," and also from Geneviève Morel, "A Young Man without an Ego: A Study on James Joyce and the Mirror Stage," in *Art: Sublimation or Symptom,* ed. Parveen Adams, Contemporary Theory Series, ed. Frances Restuccia, (New York: Other Press, 2003), 123-46.

lack, that the Other knows. Hence, such a belief in the symptom amounts to a belief in the Other.[143]

This belief in the symptom is typical of the first step in the psychoanalytic process, prior to traversing of fantasy. A traversing of the fantasy occurs when the patient concludes that S_2 does not exist. At this point, the subject has three choices: (1) to stick to the previous solution and look for yet another meaning (the alternation between the Tower and the Ministry); (2) to choose to believe that meaning itself does not exist, resulting in a crisis of the Symbolic and possible psychosis (*The Simpsons* Effect); or (3) to choose a new solution and identify with the Real of the symptom, recognizing that meaning exists but is always and everywhere imperfect.[144]

Verhaeghe and Declercq stress the fact that an identification with the symptom does not come down to surrendering: the attitude of "if you can't beat 'em, join 'em." Such an attitude is an expression of impotence since the inability to connect S_1 to S_2 is considered a failure of the individual; the conviction exists that somewhere, other people—the Other—succeed in realizing the connection where "I" have failed (*The Simpsons* Effect). Impotence, therefore, requires belief in the symptom. A subject can avoid impotence and identify with the symptom by verifying that the failure is not a matter of individual impotence, but rather the product of structural impossibility.[145]

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[143] Verhaeghe and Declercq, "Lacan's Analytic Goal," 67.

[144] Ibid., 67-68.

[145] Ibid., 68.

The recognition of structural impossibility is of great importance to the Lacanian subject. The most radical dimension of Lacanian theory lies not in realizing that the Lacanian subject is divided and split, but in coming to understand that the Other, the Symbolic order itself, is also split, structured around an impossible/traumatic kernel, a central lack. Without this lack in the Other, the Other would be a closed structure and the only possibility open to the subject would be a radical alienation from the Other. So, it is precisely this lack in the Other that enables the subject to achieve a kind of 'de-alienation', not in the sense that the subject experiences a complete and utter separation from the object, but that the subject realizes that the object is also separated from the Other, that the Other does not in reality possess the final answer. The recognition of this lack in the Other once again gives the subject the space to avoid total alienation, not as before by using fantasy to fill out the lack, but by allowing the subject to identify the lack in the Self with the lack in the Other. In this way, the object *a* is transformed into a signifier that represents the inconsistency in the Other. Lacan's algebra for this signifier of the Other's lack is S(Ⱥ), "S" stands for the signifier, while the bar through the "A" shows that the Other is itself barred or split like the Lacanian subject, $. It is to Lynch's recognition and manipulation of this lack that we now turn.

MULHOLLAND DRIVE AND MUSIC AS FANTASY

Mulholland Drive was originally shot as a two-hour pilot for an ABC drama. After viewing the pilot, however, the producers at ABC passed on the project, but retained control of the footage. A number of years went by before

Lynch was able to put together a group of financiers to buy back the pilot so that it could be released as a dramatic feature. The actors were called back to shoot some additional footage and *Mulholland Drive* (a.k.a. *Mulholland Dr.*) was released theatrically in 2001.

Mulholland Drive is the story of Betty (Naomi Watts), a blonde, beautiful, energetic, and extremely talented young woman who comes to Hollywood direct from Deep River, Ontario in order to realize her dream of becoming a famous actress. Arriving at her aunt's apartment, she discovers Rita (Laura Elena Harring), a mysterious brunette with amnesia who has wandered into the apartment after a car accident on *Mulholland Drive*. The two women set out to solve the mystery of Rita's true identity in hopes of explaining who she is and where she obtained a purse full of money and a small, blue, triangular key.

Betty and Rita eventually begin a passionate love affair, but just as they get closer to finding Rita's identity, the film splits and, much as was the case in *Lost Highway*, we suddenly seem to be watching a different story where the characters of Betty and Rita are inverted and their names changed—Betty becomes Diane (Watts) and Rita become Camilla (Harring). The last thirty minutes of the film consist of a series of flashbacks presented in a twisted chronological order where we learn that Diane (a failed actress) and Camilla (the most successful actress in town) were romantically involved until Camilla became engaged to Adam (a Hollywood director). Diane, enraged and humiliated by this rejection, hires a hit man to murder Camilla. The hit man tells Diane she will find a small blue key on her coffee table when the job is done.

Once Diane gets confirmation that Camilla is dead, she runs into her bedroom screaming and commits suicide by shooting herself.[146]

Two scenes are particularly crucial to understanding the film, and they both rely heavily on music. The first occurs at the opening of the film. A nondiegetic jazz band plays a swinging riff tune (à la Gene Krupa) that accompanies images of jitterbuggers dancing to the beat. In the shot, at least five different images of the same few dancers are superimposed over one another (see Figure 5.3). Images of Betty begin to bleed through the layers of dancers and it appears she is standing before a large crowd showering her with applause (see Figure 5.4). As the song ends, the camera zooms in on a pillow (see Figure 5.5).

Figure 5.3: "Jitterbug," several superimposed images of the same few dancers.

[146] In the interest of being brief, this synopsis naturally excludes mention of characters like The Blue-Haired Lady, The Man Behind Winkies, The Cowboy, and others that seem insignificant, but play an important role in the film. Some of these characters will be discussed below.

Figure 5.4: An image of Betty (Naomi Watts), presumably in front of a large crowd, bleeds through the images of the dancers.

Figure 5.5: A close-up of a pillow suggests it is all a dream.

On first consideration, a dream seems a somewhat obvious and simple interpretation; but for Hitchcock fans, the scene takes on added meaning. In

Shadow of a Doubt, Hitchcock and his composer, Dimitri Tiomkin, create what Royal S. Brown calls a "musicovisual metonymy" for the main character's (Uncle Charlie) particular predilection by associating him from the very beginning with Franz Lehár's "Merry Widow Waltz." The movie opens with "a nondiegetic visual" of couples dancing to the "Merry Widow Waltz" in turn-of-the-century dress. In "Overtones and Undertones", Brown notices that,

> It quickly becomes evident that the waltz stands not just for Uncle Charlie's peculiarities [he likes to seduce and murder rich widows for their money] but for the very nature of his psychology. The screenplay quickly establishes a major element of Uncle Charlie's psychology as a loathing of the present day in favor of an idealized past…Within this perspective both the "old-fashioned" waltz and the "old-fashioned" couples dancing become a metonymical expression of Charlie's nostalgia and a warning of his inability to relate to the present world.[147]

This musicovisual metonymy from *Shadow of a Doubt* parallels the opening scene of *Mulholland Drive*. Lynch, in addition to telling us that Betty is a dream-like, fantasy representation of Diane, establishes Diane's psychology from the very beginning of the film—her inability to deal with reality—even though Diane doesn't enter until the last thirty minutes of the film. This connection of Diane with the opening of the film is confirmed when she announces that she had "always wanted to come here [Hollywood] … I won this jitterbug contest … that sort of led to acting … you know, wanting to act." Thus, the jitterbugging scene becomes a musicovisual stand-in for Diane's nostalgic, utopian past—a time before her dreams of acting were crushed by the oppressive Hollywood system

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[147] Royal S. Brown, *Overtones and Undertones: Reading Film Music,* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1994) 71-72. [brackets added]

with its unseen power mongers. A kind of naïve nostalgia pervades the entire first two hours of *Mulholland Drive* up to the film's split.

Most of the narrative in the first two hours can be read as a dream-like fantasy world where Diane imagines herself as a strong, daring, talented actress named Betty in a much simpler time (the name Betty comes from the name of the waitress in the diner where Diane hires the hit man). Betty's lover, Rita, is a scared, weak individual who depends on Betty for survival[148] (in reality it is Diane who depends on Camilla). From Diane's perspective, Camilla Rhodes is an actress who has mysterious forces conspiring to ensure she gets the lead roles in the best films. Thus, similar to the Fred/Pete characters in *Lost Highway*, Betty is Diane as Diane sees herself (or as she would like the Other to see her), and the split in the film is the split between Diane's fantasy world and her reality. This separating of fantasy from reality equates once again to the characteristic Lynchian traversal of fantasy, a recognition of fantasy's function as protective screen. *Mulholland Drive*, however, is able to move beyond *Lost Highway*'s psychotic crisis of the Symbolic. It manages this in a second crucial scene, just before the film's split at Club Silencio that also involves music.

BEYOND *LOST HIGHWAY*: *MULHOLLAND DRIVE* AND MUSIC AS *SINTHOME*

Betty and Rita are drawn to the club late one night when Rita begins talking in her sleep, repeating over and over again the phrase, *"Silencio…No hay banda. Silencio…No hay banda."* Upon arriving at Club Silencio, Betty and Rita

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[148] In the film Rita even changes her appearance to look like Betty by wearing a blonde wig.

find the Magician already onstage, and it seems that everyone has been waiting for them. The Magician begins his performance as they take their seats:

> *No hay banda!* There is no band! *Il n'y a pas d'orchestre.* This is all a tape recording. *No hay banda,* and yet, we hear a band. If you want to hear a clarinet, listen. [clarinet plays] *Un trombon en coulisse.* [trombone plays]. *Un trombon con sordina.* [muted trombone plays] *J'aime le son d'une trombone en sourdine. J'ame le son!* A muted trumpet (see Figure 5.6).

A musician steps out from behind the curtain playing a muted trumpet. Suddenly, he pulls the trumpet away from his mouth, holding out both arms as the sound of a muted trumpet continues (see Figure 5.7). The Magician continues, "It's all recorded. *No hay banda!* It is all a tape." The Magician throws his hand to the left and a trumpet sounds on the left, then to the right and back to the left. "*Il n'y a pas d'orchestre.* It is an illusion. Listen!" The Magician throws his hands into the air creating thunderclaps and blue lightening. Betty begins to shake and the Magician disappears in a cloud of smoke.

Figure 5.6: "Listen." "It's all recorded".

Figure 5.7: The Trumpet Player removes his trumpet as the sound continues.

It is at this moment that the Blue-Haired Lady is shown sitting stoically in an upper box (see Figure 5.8). The Emcee enters the stage as the smoke settles to introduce the next act: "*la llorona de los Angeles*…Rebekah Del Rio," who sings "Llorando"—an *a cappella* version of Roy Orbison's "Crying" in Spanish (see Figure 5.9). In Mexican folklore, *la Llorona*—Spanish for "the crying woman"—is the ghost of a woman weeping for her dead children whom she murders after being abandoned by her lover; her appearance is held to foreshadow death. Similarly, the lyrics to Orbison's "Crying" tells the story an abandoned lover's encounter with the lover who no longer reciprocates. The abandoned lover believes him-/herself over an old flame, but the encounter nevertheless results in "crying."

Figure 5.8: The Blue-Haired Lady watches quietly from above as the Magician performs.

Figure 5.9: After the smoke clears from the Magician's act, "*La llorona de los Angeles*…Rebekah Del Rio," takes the stage to perform.

During the song, there are several extreme close-ups of the singer and of Betty and Rita who, extremely moved by the song, begin to cry (see Figures 5.10 and 5.11). At the climax of the song and precisely on the lyric "now you're gone," Del Rio collapses without warning, as the song continues (see Figure 5.12). Her body is carried off the stage and, as the song finishes, Betty and Rita discover a small blue box in Betty's purse. The two women rush home with the blue box to get the blue key that will open it; the film splits upon the opening of the box (see Table 5.1 for a list of timings of "Jitterbug" and "Llorando" in *Mulholland Drive*).

Figure 5.10: Rebekah Del Rio performs "Llorando" ("Crying").

Figure 5.11: Rita (Laura Elena Harring) and Betty are moved by the performance.

Figure 5.12: The singer collapses as the song continues to play…it's all an illusion.

Time	Music	Scene
0:41—2:03	"Jitterbug."	Opening scene with dancers.
1:49:10—1:52:39	"Llorando" ("Crying") sung by Rebekah Del Rio	Scene at Club Silencio

Table 5.1: Timings for "Jitterbug" and "Llorando" ("Crying") in *Mulholland Drive*.[149]

This scene suggests that the first two hours of the film have been fantasy, "an illusion," and, like *Lost Highway*, Lynch uses music to make this point. However, Lynch manages this scene so that its significance lies not only in its reinforcement of the fantasy/reality split, but also in the opening of that mysterious domain designated by Lacan as "between two deaths." Lacan conceived of this domain as the difference between actual (biological) death and its placement in the Symbolic. The usual order is for symbolization (burial) to follow actual death by a short, culturally determined interval. When either the time to burial exceeds this interval, or the progression is inverted (the death in the Symbolic precedes actual death), a gap—the space between two deaths—is created. In Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, for example, the actual death of Hamlet's father is denied entrance into the Symbolic; this is why Hamlet's father haunts, must appear as a ghost until his debt has been paid and his accounts settled. The story of Antigone represents the opposite case: the symbolic death, her exclusion from the community, precedes her actual death.[150] In both stories, the narrative derives much of its motivation by the gap between the deaths.

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[149] David Lynch, *Mulholland Dr.*, 2001, 147 min., Universal Studios, 2002, DVD.

[150] Žižek, *The Sublime Object,* 135.

Something similar happens in *Mulholland Drive*. Here, the collapse of the singer and the opening of the blue box at the end of the scene signals Camilla's death—whether actual or symbolic is initially unclear, though Betty's physical reactions, her shaking and crying, suggest the former. In any case, a gap, which also has the effect of a psychic wound, opens at this moment, and the second half of the film is motivated by the "need" to knit the two deaths together, thereby closing the wound.

The second death occurs at the end of the movie with Diane's suicide, the moment she finds the blue key on her coffee table. For recognizing the death of Camilla, Diane also dies, Camilla having been Diane's only reason to live.[151] The blue key's significance was unknown at the time of its appearance during the scene at Club Silencio. The appearance of the key just before Diane's suicide, however, confirms (writes into the Symbolic) Camilla's actual death and suggests that the entire "reality" portion of the film takes place in the space between these two deaths. Remember, however, that reality and fantasy normally appear vertically, fantasy always constructing "reality" and protecting it from the Real. If we read the "reality" portion of the film as occurring in the space between two deaths and the fantasy portion of the film as once again torn apart from "reality" and presented horizontally instead of vertically (as was the case in *Lost Highway*), then, a realigning of fantasy vertically with "reality" shows that the whole movie takes place in the space between the two deaths. Thus, the film collapses into a single point where the opening of the box, Camilla's death, the finding of the key

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[151] Camilla's Symbolic death then has a coda of sorts in the form of Diane actual death.

and Diane's suicide all coincide. It is Lynch's separating of fantasy and reality, his traversal of fantasy that expands the space between the two deaths.

According to Žižek this place between the two deaths is "a place of sublime beauty as well as terrifying monsters," it is the site of "das Ding, of the real-traumatic kernel in the midst of the symbolic order."[152] The frightful apparition of Hamlet's father in Shakespeare's play and the sublime beauty of Antigone are manifestations of this aspect of the space. Similarly, one of the important features of the scene at Club Silencio is the circulation of what Chion calls an *acousmêtre,* an acoustic being, a voice without bearer or bodiless voice.[153]

Music in Club Silencio is continually denied a body, the sources of sounds shown only to be unmasked as illusions, recordings (constructions). For instance, when the musician walks out on stage playing a muted trumpet, the sound continues even as he removes the trumpet from his lips. The Magician, not the bodies of musicians, seems to control the music, as he seems capable of producing whatever sound he desires, in any place he chooses. However, precisely because he can command music to sound in this way, the Magician also denies it a body, allowing it to float free and exist (ex-sist) everywhere. Likewise Rebekah Del Rio's song at first comes as a moment of relief, music seeming to have found a body. However, her singing body once again turns out to be illusion, a construction as the voice continues after her collapse. Music remains,

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[152] Žižek, *The Sublime Object,* 135.

[153] Michel Chion, *The Voice in Cinema,* ed. and trans., Claudia Gorbman, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999) 17-29.

then, as an *acousmêtre,* its appearance otherwise being precisely that—appearance, illusion.

The power of the *acousmêtre,* according to Chion, lies in its ability to be everywhere, to see all and to know all.[154] Music as *acousmêtre* (as a voice without a body) functions, then, not only as an ex-sisting knowledge, but also as a possible threat that lurks everywhere, hovering like a voice in some indefinite interspace. It is a voice that belongs neither to the diegetic "reality" nor to the nondiegetic sound accompaniment (commentary, musical score). It is akin to what Chion calls "over-the-air" sound, but of a very peculiar sort inasmuch as it is always suggesting to be otherwise, despite the Magicians protestations to the contrary.

According to Chion, the visual complement to the voice without body is the body without voice, that is, a mute. Chion points to a symmetrical relation between the bodiless voice and voiceless body: both are understood as all-seeing, all-knowing, often even all-powerful. In other words, they both are taken to be the Other-who-knows, that is, the representation of the Symbolic Other as the Subject Supposed to Know. Indeed, arguably the most significant figure in the Silencio scene is neither the Magician nor Rebekah Del Rio, but the Blue-Haired Lady who sits high above, silently watching the scene. In this respect, it is worth noting that Diane's suicide at the end of the film is followed by a brief shot of the Blue-Haired Lady speaking the word "*silencio*" (see Figures 5.13 and 5.14). On first inspection, it might seem that her pronouncement of "*silencio*" is the

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[154] Chion, *Voice in Cinema*, 24.

fulfillment of Diane's Symbolic death, a kind of funeral pronouncement for Diane to rest in peace: "*silencio,* silence poor Diane…your torment is no more." To accept this reading, however, is to forget everything learned at Club Silencio.

Figure 5.13: Betty's dead.

Figure 5.14: The final pronouncement: *"Silencio"*.

The scene taught us that all is an illusion: each time we get drawn into a performance (the, Magician's, the Trumpet Player's and Rebekah Del Rio's) it is eventually revealed as illusion.[155] Remembering this lesson, the Blue-Haired Lady at the end of *Mulholland Drive* is not saying "*silencio*" (silence) so much as she is reminding us of "*silencio*" (it is all an illusion): even that part of the film we perceived as "reality" is yet another illusion. In this way, Diane's actual death has not yet entered the Symbolic, creating another space between two deaths that this time remains open. In fact, earlier in the film, Betty and Rita do discover Diane's decomposing body lying on the bed where she shoots herself. This is not so much the experience of Diane's Symbolic death preceding her actual death as a confirmation that Diane's body will remain undiscovered, the Symbolic death being postponed. The psychic wound remains open.

The Blue-Haired Lady's "*silencio,*" in fact, provides a solution to our crisis of the Symbolic, as at that moment the film offers a model for how to construct and identify with the *sinthome*. Accepting a voice, the mute character is thereby subjectified, accepts her role as subject, while also understanding that her subjectification is a construct, an illusion necessary to place herself in the culture of Club Silencio (a microcosm of culture in general), to contribute to its shaping. She forgoes her putative powers—her status as the Other Supposed to Know—and becomes a participant rather than an observer.[156]

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[155] In fact, Lynch's continuing of the music after the singer's collapse turns the implication of the scene away from signifying death to the signification of illusion.

[156] Chion, *Voice in Cinema,* 100.

During the scene at Club Silencio, the aural complement to the Blue-Haired Lady is music as *acousmêtre*, but its position changes with the speaking of the mute character. Music is no longer attached to an Other with a supposed knowledge (this Other being revealed as illusion), but to an Other that doesn't have all the answers, to an Other who is experienced as lacking and itself split, not unlike the subject. In other words, music ceases to function as an *acousmêtre,* (object *a*), and begins to function as the signifier of the Other's lack: as *sinthome*.

Žižek explains the *sinthome* with Patricia Highsmith's "The "Button," a short story where a Manhattan family has a grotesque mongoloid child who is unable to communicate or understand anything. The father sees the child as an underserved punishment and its idiotic cooing reminds him daily of the inconsistency and indifference of the universe, of its ultimate senselessness. Here we have a subject who is experiencing a Symbolic crisis, the crisis that the meaning does not exist. Late one evening, however, the father takes a walk to escape the child and ends up getting into a fight with a drunk. In a burst of rage, the father kills the drunk. He notices afterwards that he is in possession of a button from the drunk's overcoat. Rather than destroy the evidence, the father chooses to keep it as a kind of souvenir. For the father, this button becomes a token of comfort since it reminds him of the absurdity of the universe. The button attests to the ultimate nonsense of the universe; yet, because he can manipulate it like other objects in the world, it also allows the father to sustain himself in the midst of the inconsistency of the Other. In Lacanian terms, the button functions as the Signifier of the Lack in the Other S(Ⱥ), as a plaything used to help us to deal with the fact that meaning exists, but the Other does not

have any more access to it than we do, that the Other does not know all. It is important to note that the button in Highsmith's story is given its power as S(Ⱥ) (as *sinthome*) retroactively, only after the father takes control, after the realization that the Other as Subject Supposed to Know does not exist.

Music in *Mulholland Drive* takes on a similar role. At first associated with the Blue-Haired Lady, with the Other as Subject Supposed to Know, music retroactively becomes a rem(a)inder of the non-ex-sistence of this Other. In other words, the Blue-Haired Lady's "*silencio*" suggests that music no longer simply functions as a rem(a)inder of *jouissance* (object *a*), as a blank object projecting fantasies of "being," but is transformed into an object signifying that the Other, as the possessor of knowledge, does not exist S(Ⱥ)—into the Lacanian *sinthome*! Music is the Lynchian *sinthome*, the object that can be played with, manipulated, held in our hand (sung in our hearts) to remind us that the Other does not know all; that we, like the father in Highsmith's story, can take control.

The construction and identification with the music as *sinthome* in *Mulholland Drive* helps us deal with the film's Symbolic crisis, the unresolved space between two deaths created by the non-arrival of Diane's Symbolic death, the space that retroactively can now be seen as the gap in which the entire narrative of the film occurs. The significance of the relationship between the *sinthome* and the Symbolic crisis is that the *sinthome* acts as a kind of life preserver, a fourth ring not unlike a floatation ring keeping someone afloat in the ocean. If the ring disappears, then so does the subject into a sea of psychosis. Lacan saw this fourth ring as a way for the subject to suture RSI providing the subject with a kind of supplemental Borromean consistency that allowed the

subject to achieve some sense of normalcy, providing a way beyond the crisis of the Symbolic and out of psychosis (see Figure 5.15).

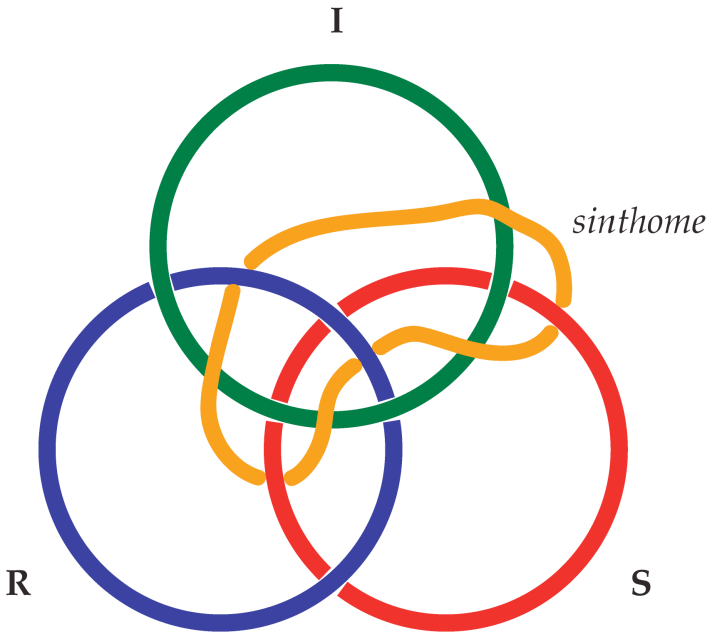

Figure 5.15: Borromean knot with the *sinthome* as the fourth ring,.[157]

IDENTIFICATION WITH THE *SINTHOME* AS A REPOSITIONING OF *JOUIS-SENS*

Analysis, for Lacan, makes clear that the essence of the subject is situated at the place of lack in the Other, the place where the Other does not provide us with an answer. A newly constituted subject becomes possible once a point has been reached where the symptoms are revealed (or understood) as fundamentally nonsensical. Here, the subject discovers itself as "an answer of

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[157] Notice how the three original rings do not conform to a Borromean consistency, but rather, simply lie on top of each other. The fourth ring, the *sinthome*, functions as a substitute for the Symbolic ring re-knotting RSI.

the Real" and not "an answer of the Other."[158] This change implies a change in the subject's position vis-à-vis *jouissance*. Before, the subject situated all *jouissance* on the side of the Other—the belief that the Other possesses what is denied to me—either in the form of phallic *jouissance* JΦ, *jouissance* of the Other, JA or *jouis-sens*. After this change, the subject eliminates two of the forms, JΦ and JA since these two forms are radically dependent on the Other. This leaves only *jouis-sens,* no longer located in the Other, but in the Real (in the Freudian Drives). Hence, there is no longer a *jouissance* prescribed by the Other, but a *jouis-sens* brought about by the subject. Identifying with the *sinthome* denies the force of identification to the Symbolic or the Imaginary and substitutes instead, a Real identification, that is an identification with the lack in the Other.[159]

Making this identification entails I recognize that the symptom is just my particular way of organizing *jouissance*, taking possession of, but also responsibility for it as my meaning. This binds the *sinthome* specifically to *jouis-sens* and enjoyment-in-meaning. Now enjoyment-in-meaning means that the *sinthome* need not communicate a meaning to someone (it can offer no imperative to communicate meaning without falling under the Other); it may not even have a meaning to be communicated. The *sinthome* does not relate meaning to "truth" (as that which is known and withheld by the Other) or to its absence (there is no "truth" because there is no Other to guarantee its existence). Finding enjoyment-in-meaning means identifying with the *sinthome* by means of its lack of meaning,

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[158] Verhaeghe and Declercq, "Lacan's Analytic Goal," 68.

[159] Ibid., 69.

something outside itself—or rather outside me—to give it definition: the *sinthome* produces enigmas that spur me to make meaning, to make many different meanings.

This lack of meaning in the *sinthome* is akin to poetry: innumerable readings do not yield a poem's meaning, because the meaning of a poem is not to mean, but to mean what it is not. That's why it is as if the poem has read us: it remains opaque and produces whole chains of signifiers with and within us. Likewise the *sinthome* might be a very familiar object but we do not quite know what to make of it: approaching it again and again we (re)make ourselves. We do not determine the meaning of the object so much as the object determines us through our engagement and commitment to its meaning. The whole idea is that the *sinthome* produces our meaning(s) out of nothing, over and over again.[160] The *sinthome* relates not to the meaning produced, but to the activity of production itself. My unconscious produces meaningless symptoms, symptoms that hit me as enigmas even though I am their source and confronting those enigmas produces me over and over again.

The *sinthome* as *jouis-sens* can be seen as the ultimate support of the subject, and at the same time the source of the subject's openness to the production of meanings. In relation to the openness, the *sinthome* as *jouis-sens* could be construed as a kind of meaning of meaning through the development of a chain of differentiated, open-ended significations. We can be open to meanings because we are always-already enjoying the imperfect structure(s) within which

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[160] Hoens and Pluth, "The *sinthome*," 11.

meaning occurs, the imperfection allowing meaning to occur. Our ultimate identity, the ultimate support of our being, is the particular way in which we enjoy meaning: our *sinthome*. The condition for this is that we must "fall" from our belief in the Other and specifically from our belief in the existence of the Other as the Subject Supposed to Know.[161]

In Chapter Two, I argued that the crisis of the Symbolic associated with the Ministry of Truth concerned securing meaning in the name of knowledge and truth. The Blue-Haired Lady's "*silencio*" suggests that a shift to an enjoyment-in-meaning without the Other may offer a way of razing the Ministry—or at the least reveal its corridors as an imperfect and ineffectual bureaucracy, which produces what it does not mean (and, vice versa, means what it does not produce). The Ministry may well make the expression of meaning possible, but it also lacks truth: the Ministry does not house the Other-Who-Knows; its bureaucracy does not hide knowledge. Rather, the Ministry constructs a discourse with the appearance of truth by suppressing an awareness of its lack. The meaning of the Ministry is the end of meaning, which also sets a limit of *jouis-sens*, to my enjoyment-in-meaning. The Ministry allows me to impose a limit on meaning for which I do not have to take personal responsibility. In this way, I deny myself the opportunity to construct my own *jouis-sens*, because it appears to me that it is always already being constructed for me.

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[161] Ibid., 12.

Chapter Six: Beethoven and *Jouis-sens*; or Learning to Enjoy the Ninth

According to Lacan, identifying with the *sinthome* leads to a type of knowledge in the Real. Lacan calls this type of knowledge *savoir*,[162] which must also be accompanied by an active forgetfulness. This active forgetfulness entails *knowing that* something is the case, but *acting as if* one does not know. In *Blue Velvet*, *Lost Highway*, and *Mulholland Drive*, Lynch consistently treats music as object *a*, but only at the end of *Mulholland Drive* do we find *savoir,* the knowledge that comes from identifying with the *sinthome*. In particular, the power of the "*silencio*" uttered by the Blue-Haired Women at the end of *Mulholland Drive* is the way that it doubles this active forgetfulness back on itself in order to reveal the utterance as an appearance of *savoir*.

This *knowing that*, but *acting as if* one does not know, has a parallel in a group of loosely related cultural theories (among them post-postmodernism, performatism, and a return to aesthetics) that have been collected under the term, The New Sincerity. In this chapter, I draw particularly on Raoul Eshelman's version of performatism as support for the claim that identifying with the *sinthome* offers a solution to the current crises in music scholarship. Finally, I construct a performatist reading of the two moments of Beethoven's Ninth discussed in Chapter Two—the recapitulation of the first movement and

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[162] Lacan distinguishes between two kinds of knowledge, *connaissance,* which is knowledge of the Ego, and *savoir,* which is knowledge of the subject. Since both of these French terms are translated by the single English word "knowledge" it is important, when reading Lacan in translation, to be aware of which French word Lacan uses in the original text. Evans, *An Introductory Dictionary*, 94.

the Turkish march from the fourth movement—to demonstrate how Lynch's identification with music as *sinthome* might be translated into music discourse.

LYNCH AND THE MUSICAL CRISIS OF THE SYMBOLIC

In Chapter One, I argued that music plays a special role in David Lynch's cinematic imagination and emphasized the need for scholars to examine more closely the music in Lynch's films. Lynch is known for his creation of fantasy worlds that depict situation of extreme violence and sadomasochistic sex, and, disturbingly, music plays an indispensable role as a blank screen for the projection of these fantasy worlds. When examined through the lens of Lacanian psychoanalysis, Lynch's characters seem to manage the crises in their Symbolic universe by forging a distinctive link between music and fantasy. Because the current crises that music scholarship confronts resemble those faced by Lynch's characters, I argue that his films offer us a map to chart a way out of the crises of our field to *savoir*.

In Chapter Two, I outlined and expanded upon Kevin Korsyn's framework of the crises in music scholarship. The Tower of Babel's fragmentation of knowledge creates an all-or-nothing attitude towards knowledge. The Ministry of Truth is an agency that intervenes in and offers an explanation for this situation by allowing us to believe that it is actively hiding some sort of true knowledge that it denies us. *The Simpsons* Effect is in part a response to the postmodern ennui produced by the other two crises, but it also lashes out at the Symbolic with a cynical irony that threatens to further damage the Symbolic to a point that it becomes impossible to restore. Mapping these

crises of the Symbolic onto a Lacanian reading of *Blue Velvet*, *Lost Highway* and *Mulholland Drive*, we found that each film offers a way to analyze and negotiate the particular challenges of each face of the crisis.

In Chapter Three, I showed how an ironic reading of the three songs in *Blue Velvet* nearly goes without saying: critics barely take the time to mention the music except to point out the multiplicity of meaning that the juxtapositions of these songs with violence engender. What is lost in these readings is the extent to which the film might be attempting a sincere exploration of the role of fantasy in 1960s America.[163] An examination of *Blue Velvet* through the lens of Lacanian psychoanalysis, by contrast, reveals that music functions as object *a* suggesting that the juxtapositions of the songs with Frank Booth might be better understood as securing phallic *jouissance*, JΦ. Indeed, in the face of a Symbolic crisis and the resulting loss of *jouissance* through the absence of the Name-of-the-Father, we need Frank Booth as our guarantor of enjoyment. We need to know that *jouissance* exists and that it is attainable, if not for us, then, at least for the Other. Reading the juxtapositions between music and violence as ironic may serve as a defense that allows us not to have to confront Frank as real; but the cost of this defense is high, as it opens the psyche to a deeper horror: *jouissance* is not possible! In this way, the over-ironized, postmodern subject suffering from *The Simpsons* Effect, experiences not only a crisis of knowledge, but also a more debilitating crisis of *jouissance*.

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[163] Rombes, "*Blue Velvet* Underground," 61-62.

Chapter Four argued the need to traverse the fantasies associated with music as object *a*, showing how if left untraversed, they lead to the crises of the Symbolic. Following Žižek, I showed how Lynch's traversal of fantasy in *Lost Highway* was achieved through his use of music to separate fantasy from reality, exposing fantasy as such and revealing the void it attempts to mask. This traversal of fantasy, however, is not completely without risk in that it can lead to a crisis of its own if the subject begins to question the validity of the Symbolic. This deterioration of the Symbolic initiates the falling apart of the Borromean knot (RSI) and pushes the subject into a possible state psychosis. Finally, I argued that this falling apart of RSI not only explains the psychotic feel of *Lost Highway,* but is also evident in the current crisis of music scholarship.

Chapter Five dealt with the crisis of the Symbolic left in the wake of the traversing of fantasy, showing how music's inherent blankness, which allows it to function as a screen for the projection of fantasies, is yet, another layer of fantasy that must be traversed. Lacan's solution to this failure of the Symbolic was the creation and identification of a *sinthome* that would function as a suppletion[164] to the Symbolic and suture the three rings of the Borromean knot (RSI). I demonstrated how Lynch's transformation of music from object *a* to *sinthome* in *Mulholland Drive* masters the crisis of the Symbolic by adopting the stance that the Other does not know all. Taking this stance, the subject no longer needs to obsess about a *jouissance* of the Other, but is instead, able to create a *jouis-sens* of its own, free from the Other.

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[164] Suppletion is the use of an unrelated term to fill the gap when another term is missing. Here, the *sinthome* fills the gap created by the deterioration of the Symbolic.

A Lacanian reading of the three Lynch films shows that what is at stake in the three forms of the crisis of the Symbolic is not only a lack of knowledge, but also a foreclosure (or at least substantial containment) of all three modes of *jouissance*. Each face of the crisis assumes the existence of a supposed knowledge to which we do not have access, a supposed knowledge in the Other. The Lacanian solution to the crisis is to accept that this supposed knowledge does not exist: we must fall from our belief in the Other as the Subject Supposed to Know. Lynch models this fall through his construction of music as *sinthome*. These films teach us that identifying with the *sinthome* gains access to enjoyment by allowing for our construction of meaning free from the Other. In this way, Lynch moves from locating knowledge in the Other (Symbolic) to an (actual) knowledge of the Real. *Savoir* is just this knowledge of the Real.

Lacan defines *savoir* as "both a knowledge of the subject's relation to the Symbolic, and also that relation itself." Lacan argues that what this *savoir* consists of is a "knowledge of the knot" itself and the means with which "to tie it up with artifice."[165] In other words, the creation and identification with the *sinthome* is evidence of what, to coin a neologism in the spirit of Lacan, might be called "(K)not Knowledge." This is a knowledge of the *knot* (and knowing how to tie it up with the *sinthome*), as well as, the realization that the Other does *not* possess the supposed knowledge.

Lynch's construction of music as *sinthome* represents just such a (K)not Knowledge, and his films suggest that the subject's attitude towards this

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[165] Jacques Lacan, *Le Sinthome*, (Paris: Seuil, 2005), 73.

knowledge is crucial. *Mulholland Drive* suggests that we need not, indeed cannot, abandon our belief in meaning—that step leads to psychosis. Rather, we continue to believe in meaning, but realize that the Other does not have access to it (or any more access to it than we do). This recognition frees us to construct meaning unconstrained by the Other. At the same time, however, if we want to communicate we must engage in a kind of active forgetfulness and pretend that meaning actually comes from the Other. In other words, we *know very well that* the Other Who Knows does not exist but we must *act as if* that Other does exist, otherwise the meaning created would appear completely relative and therefore incommunicable, plunging us back into crisis. Only by *knowing that,* but *acting as if,* do we free ourselves to construct meaning and obtain access to a non-pathological mode of *jouis-sens*.

Žižek 's provides two examples of this *knowing that* but *acting as if*. The first is money. People know very well that their money is only paper and as such, has no value in itself (except as paper); but they act as if it did have a surplus value and as if the paper retained this value regardless of the physical deterioration of the paper. The entire modern capitalist system, Žižek says, depends on this "fetishization" of money.[166] Žižek's second example is democracy. He often uses the well-known Churchill quote that "democracy is the worst of all systems, the problem is none are better." What Žižek is pointing towards is the inherent impossibility of "true" democracy, because at the moment of its realization, true or real democracy automatically turn into its

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[166] Žižek, *The Sublime Object,* 32-33.

opposite: totalitarianism. In other words, real democracy respects only the rights of the majority; the minority has no rights and the will of the majority is forced upon them. This does not mean that we give up our search for real democracy. Instead, we must act as if real democracy were possible even though we know this is not the case. According to Žižek, the inherent impossibilities of democracy—the continuing struggles for real democracy—are what makes democracy both the best and worst of all possible systems: the struggle for real democracy produces just those corrections that make a continuation of that struggle—and therefore the continued existence of democracy—possible.[167]

MOVING BEYOND THE POSTMODERN: PERFORMATISM AND THE NEW SINCERITY

This formula of *knowing*, but *acting as if* bears remarkable similarities to a cultural theory that has come to be known as The New Sincerity. This term covers several loosely related cultural or philosophical movements that have followed in the wake of postmodernism, the most notable being what Raoul Eshelman and Judith Butler, among others, call "performatism." The basic tenet of performatism is this: even when arising from intentionally constructed situations, happiness is experienced as such, not as a false and misleading outcome. The New Sincerity extends this tenet to our experience of life and understanding of culture. The principal impetus of the New Sincerity was 9/11 and the ensuing national outpouring of emotion, which seemed to run strongly against the grain of the irreverent ironic characteristic of postmodernism. While

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[167] Žižek, *Looking Awry*, 166.

it is easy to dismiss the common claim that the attacks spelled "the death of irony," 9/11 has certainly affected the tone of critical discourse.

What are the characteristics of perfomatism? Raoul Eshelman relates the following story:

> We are introduced to a hero who was the sole survivor of a serious accident and had to fight for his life afterwards under adverse conditions. The hero describes his ordeal at great length to a second character. At first, his brave, uplifting story seems consistent and true. At the end, however, a host of clues make clear that parts of the tale must either be fantasy or lie. There is no doubt that certain details contradict well-founded scientific knowledge of our physical world. After the hero has finished, the second character, who is professionally responsible for checking the story's truth, declares that it must be false. The hero denies this but says he will offer a second story. This one is short, brutal and to the point. It repeats the basic content of the first story, but in a way not contradicting science and all known evidence. When asked about the discrepancy between the two stories, the hero answers by saying essentially this: "I am the sole witness to an accident in which I have lost everything dear to me. I have two stories that tell about it. One is beautiful and one is ugly. You have no way of knowing for sure which one is true. Which story would you prefer?" In the end, the second character's report on the case is inconclusive. Based on the facts at hand, he says, he cannot determine how the accident happened. In wrapping up his report, however, he chooses to cite a detail from the hero's first, false story rather than the second, more plausible one.[168]

This stripped-down story is Yann Martel's *Life of Pi* (2002). Eshelman stresses how it starts out like many postmodern narratives in that it encourages identification with a central character before it abruptly undercuts the terms of that identification. Eshelman notes, however, that rather than leaving us in an attitude of skeptical indeterminacy regarding the hero, as most postmodern

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[168] Eshelman, "After Postmodernism".

narratives do, *Life of Pi* encourages us to identify with the more aesthetically pleasing story even though we know it to be false. In other words, when the truth eludes us, as it must, performatism asks us to put aside the skepticism and ironically decentered states of knowing encouraged by postmodernism and act as if the better, more arresting story were in fact the true one. In other words we must actively forget our skepticism in order to "enjoy" the story.

Another feature of performatism is the necessity of a character's transcendence and, therefore, the construction of the character as ethical, beautiful, or sublime. A kind of ethical beauty is generated, for example, when the main character of *Amelie* sets up her little traps in which people "discover" small objects that bring them happiness. This construction of happiness is, then, returned to Amelie when her friends construct a similar "discovery" that allows her to find love and transcend her loneliness.[169] Performatism, then, seeks to restore a space where transcendence, goodness and beauty can be experienced even though we know that the events that yield them are wholly constructed.

A third characteristic of performatism is the notion of sacrifice. A story that combines all three elements—construction of the ethical, beautiful or sublime, transcendence and sacrifice—is Tim Burton's 2003 film *Big Fish*. The film is the story of a dying father, Ed Bloom (played by Albert Finney and Ewan McGregor), who has the propensity to tell elaborate, physically impossible stories (much as a fisherman might spin tales about the big one that got away). In fact, a large fish plays a central role in many of the father's stories. His son

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[169] Eshelman, "Performatism in the Movies".

Will (Billy Crudup), however, only wishes to know his father, to know what his life was really like without all the fantastic elaborations. In effect, the entire film is Will's frustrated attempts to get to know his "real" father. On the father's deathbed, Will begs his father to tell him the truth, but his father, never relenting in his storytelling, asks his son to tell him how it ends. Reluctant at first, but realizing that his father is about to die, Will sacrifices his need to know and begins to tell the story of his father's death, a story that is just as big and just as impossible as any his father ever told. Shortly thereafter, his father passes away and it is only at that moment, the moment when Will has joined his father in his storytelling, that he realizes the truth about his father and identifies with him as "a big fish"; only then, in the telling of the story, does Will come to "know" his father. In other words, Will was faced with a choice between two stories: one that was short, to the point, and uninteresting, which he suspected to be true; another that was elaborate, more aesthetically pleasing but, most likely, untrue. Realizing that he could never know the truth, Will sacrifices his one and only desire—to know his father—and chooses the better, more enjoyable story. Only through this sacrifice of truth does he transcend it and finally get to know his "real" father.

The fundamental premise of performatism is that when we become aware that truth is refusing to disclose itself, we choose the more aesthetically pleasing path and act as if it were true, since it is this path that brings more enjoyment and allows us in some way to transcend where we are. Protagonists of performatist narratives *know* very well that the more pleasing path is likely untrue, but they *act as if* it were—and the audience does as well.

An examination of performatism reveals that it parallels the creation and identification of the Lacanian *sinthome*. This supports the notion that both the Lacanian *sinthome* and performatism offer a similar solution to the characteristic postmodern crisis of the Symbolic, a way to recapture *jouissance*. Both involve active forgetfulness—*knowing* but *acting as if*. As with the Lacanian *sinthome*, performatist narratives are not based on some sort of delusional construction: the protagonist (but also the audience) recognizes that the "real" truth is unknowable. In other words, performatist protagonists fall from their belief in the Other as a Subject Supposed to Know; they no longer suppose the existence of an external knowledge; but they act as if this knowledge were in fact real and possible. Additionally, performatism offers us an alternative, more accessible way of discussing the crisis of the Symbolic without having to rely so heavily on Lacan's obscure and often incomprehensible system of vocabulary and algebra.

PERFORMATISM AND THE NINTH

I would like to conclude by constructing what might be considered a performatist reading of the two moments of Beethoven's Ninth discussed in Chapter Two—the recapitulation of the first movement and the Turkish march from the fourth movement. My reading attempts to do three acts characteristic of performatist texts: sacrifice, construction of enjoyment, and transcendence.

I would argue that much scholarship on the Ninth has been generated by a need to "master" the Ninth, to claim to "know" it, and to answer the question: "what does it mean?" I would propose, on the contrary, that if we want to "know" the Ninth, we must sacrifice this desire to master it, this desire to know

the (real) Ninth. If the "truth" as such can never be known—a tenet of both postmodernism and Lacan—the Ninth, too, is unknowable. This is not due to our impotence, but to the fundamental nature of knowledge and truth. Lacan adds the insight that there can be no supposed knowledge: there is no Other who holds the supposed "truth" because this Other (whether it be music theory, the new musicology, the Ninth, or Beethoven himself) is in itself lacking. Instead, we need to reposition our search for meaning (*jouis-sens*) from the Other to the Real. In this way, we are not unlike Will in *Big Fish,* whose biggest desire was to know his (real) father.

Rose Rosengard Subotnik has identified this "need for musical scholars to renounce mastery as a goal, or, for that matter, even as a virtue," as one of two fundamental themes in what she refers to as the "Next Paradigm" for musical scholarship. In fact, Subotnik has already identified this theme in the recent work of Fred Maus, Paul Attinello, and Mitchell Morris, among others.[170] Thus, like Will in *Big Fish,* it is the sacrificing of our need for "truth" that brings us closer to the (real) Ninth.

The Lacanian reading of *Blue Velvet* in Chapter Three provides an example of how enjoyment is constructed in the scholarship on the Ninth. My argument was that music functioned like object *a*, a blank screen for the projection of Frank Booth as the figure of *jouissance*, the one who, in the face of a deteriorating Symbolic, reassures us that *jouissance* ex-sists and is possible. The disturbing,

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[170] Rose Rosengard Subotnik, "Toward the Next Paradigm of Musical Scholarship," in *Beyond Structural Listening? Postmodern Modes of Hearing,* ed. Andrew Dell'Antonio, (Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press, 2004), 285-86.

sadomasochistic rape of Dorothy by Frank provides the link between Frank as a fantasy projection of phallic *jouissance* and the construction of enjoyment in the Ninth.

Recall, that it is the hidden Jeffery who witnesses the "rape" from Dorothy's closet. We, the audience, are made to assume the position of Jeffery, an unwilling spectator who has seen too much. Among other reasons, this scene is fantasy, because it parallels a child's view of sex.[171] The child, who has perhaps overheard his or her parents having sex, has no idea what real sex is, and therefore fantasizes to fill in this gap. To the child, the grunting, groaning, slapping and heavy breathing of sex sounds as if the father were beating the mother. This reading is further supported by the fact that Frank does not actually have sex with Dorothy. Indeed, Frank never even removes his clothes. He rapes Dorothy not with his penis, but with a piece of blue velvet wrapped around his hand. In this way, Frank is actually presented as impotent and unable to achieve release; he receives not (sexual) satisfaction but frustration[172] (see Figure 6.1). The point here, is that the fantasy of rape is meant, on the one hand, to fill in the child's gap in signification and, on the other, to provide the child with an example of pure phallic *jouissance*, reassuring the child that somewhere, pure enjoyment is possible; the greater horror being that this enjoyment does not exist.

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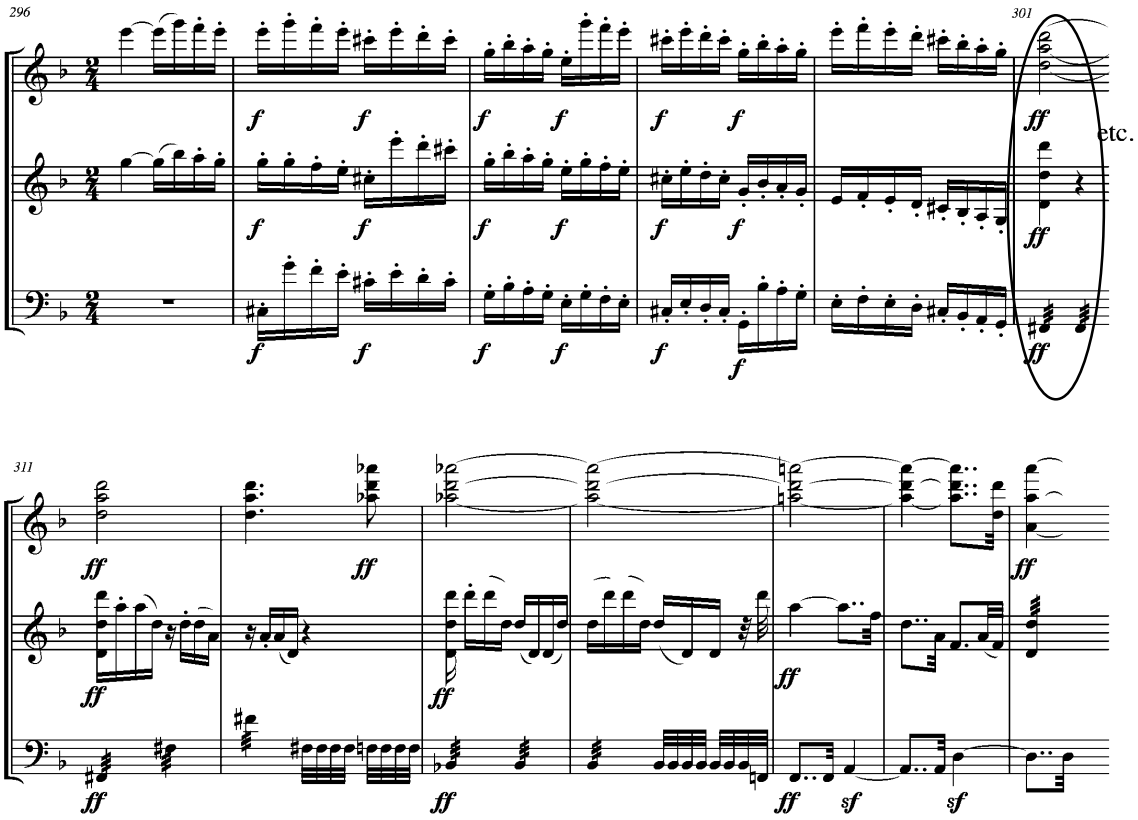
[171] Michel Chion arrives at a similar conclusion. Chion, David Lynch, 94.

[172] The child does not perceive the frustration, but instead, misreads the "throttling, murderous rage of a rapist" as pure enjoyment.

Figure 6.1: Frank's "rape" of Dorothy. The child misreads the "throttling, murderous rage of a rapist incapable of attaining release" as pure *jouissance*.

The equivalent of this "guarantee" of phallic *jouissance* in the Ninth is clearly the first inversion, D major triad in measure 301 from the first movement of the Ninth (see Example 6.1). Recall, McClary's reading of the recapitulation as "the throttling, murderous rage of a rapist incapable of attaining release." In this way, the first inversion D major triad, built on the *raised* F#, is a phallic figure. McClary's reading, thus, reveals this moment as our guarantee that pure *jouissance* exists and is attainable. Those like van den Toorn, who would dismiss or neuter McClary's reading, create a safe distance between themselves and the horrors of the recapitulation. Their asceticism, however, comes at the expense of that guarantee of enjoyment. As horrible as this moment is, the more horrible situation would be if it were not there at all, if the phallic *jouissance* projected onto this moment were perceived as altogether absent.



Example 6.1: The symphonic equivalent to Frank's "rape" of Dorothy and the reassuring that pure *jouissance* is possible.

The Turkish march from the fourth movement of the Ninth and its associations with the sublime Idea of universal brotherhood illustrates a different relationship to *jouissance*. Indeed, much of the scholarship on the Ninth has centered on the theme of universal brotherhood expounded by Schiller's text. The various musical camps usually take a position on how the Ninth supports or does not support a particular idea of universal brotherhood. As I mentioned in Chapter Two, Hatten and Cook, as well as many critics of *A Clockwork Orange,* all read the Turkish march in the fourth movement as ironic as it relates to this idea of universal brotherhood. Yet, the "knowledge" gained by these ironic

distancings could not be more conflicting. Hatten sees the march as embracing universal brotherhood through its use and juxtaposition of styles. Cook reads it as Beethoven's acknowledgement of the impossibility of universal brotherhood. And critics of *A Clockwork Orange* understand the appearance of the march as posing an ethical question of whether it is right to take a man's free will and force the notion of universal brotherhood upon him, rather than it being something he must choose.

In philosophy, the sublime is most generally opposed to the beautiful: beauty calms and comforts, whereas the sublime excites and agitates. Beauty is the sentiment evoked when the transcendental Idea appears contained in material form—a sentiment of an immediate harmony between Idea and the material of its expression. The sublime, by contrast, is the sentiment attached to chaotic, threatening, and terrifyingly limitless phenomena—the transcendental Idea appears as uncontained and so also unattainable. Above all, beauty and the sublime are opposed along the axis of pleasure-displeasure: Beauty offers pleasure immediately (i.e., without mediation), whereas the sublime offers pleasure that is "only possible through the mediation of displeasure".[173] In Lacanian terms, the sublime is therefore "beyond the pleasure principle"; it is a paradoxical pleasure procured by displeasure itself—the exact definition of Lacanian *jouissance*.

Descriptions of the sublime nature of the Ninth have existed for as long as the work itself but have become a primary topic in recent discourse. For

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[173] Žižek, *The Sublime Object,* 202.

example, Richard Taruskin's "Resisting the Ninth" describes the Ninth as "vast, awe-inspiring" and "sublime". Indeed he argues that formal analysis, beginning with Schenker, is nothing more than an attempt to "neuter" the Ninth. Its deflection from "meaning" to "structure," Taruskin charges, is primarily a means of resisting the sublime nature of the Ninth.[174] Similarly, Eichhorn adds his voice to the debate by positioning the Ninth as a "watershed" event in the aesthetic relation of the beauty and the sublime; he treats selected passages of the symphony as specific manifestations of the sublime (his selections include, of course, the recapitulation of the first movement).[175] He even adds that the immense difficulties encountered in performing the Ninth, are the result of (and add to) the sublime nature of the work. Thus, Beethoven, by making certain moments of the Ninth nearly impossible to perform, in effect, composed into the work the very idea of that which cannot be represented—the unattainable, transcendental Idea.[176]

This idea of presenting that which lies beyond presentation is the crux of Robert Fink's "Beethoven Antihero" that attempts to recast McClary's rape description of the Ninth as a failure corresponding to one of Jean-Francois

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[174] Taruskin, "Resisting the Ninth," 250.

[175] Eichhorn, *Beethoven's Neunte Symphonie,* summarized in Burnham, "Our Sublime Ninth," 161-62.

[176] Ibid., see Eichhorn, *Beethoven's Neunte Symphonie,* 183. Of course the problem with Eichhorn's reading is that he places Beethoven in the position of an Other who knows, an Other who knowingly constructed the sublime into the Ninth.

Lyotard's versions of the sublime.[177] Lyotard divides the sublime into two distinct moments: the modern, and the postmodern. Of the former he writes:

> Modern aesthetics is an aesthetic of the sublime, though a nostalgic one. It allows the unpresentable to be put forward only as the missing contents: but the form, because of its recognizable consistency, continues to offer to the reader or viewer matter for solace and pleasure.[178]

The modern sublime consists of the dialectic between the transcendence of presentation on the one hand, but the need to present a consistent form that is to be transcended on the other. For Lyotard, the postmodern sublime would be that which

> in the modern, puts forward the unpresentable in presentation itself; that which denies itself the solace of good forms, the consensus of a taste which would make it possible to share collectively the nostalgia for the unattainable; that which searches for new presentations, not in order to enjoy them but in order to impart a stronger sense of the unpresentable.[179]

The distinction between Lyotard's sublime moments—modern and postmodern—turns on a relationship to form: whereas both point to an Idea that the transcendence of form seeks to present, modernism construes this Idea as the missing content within a recognizable form. The empty form nevertheless offers

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[177] Robert Fink, "Beethoven Antihero: Sex, Violence, and the Aesthetics of Failure, or Listening to the Ninth Symphony as Postmodern Sublime," in *Beyond Structural Listening? Postmodern Modes of Hearing,* ed. Andrew Dell'Antonio, (Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press, 2004), 111-12.

[178] Jean-François Lyotard, "Answering the Question: What is Postmodernism?" trans., Régis Durand in *Postmodernism: A Reader,* ed., Thomas Docherty, (New York: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1993), 46.

[179] Ibid., 46.

solace: the illusion of a plentitudinous past when that form was filled. The postmodern sublime, by contrast, construes this Idea immanently, as the negative presentation of form itself. Here the form is not empty, but filled with its Idea of an unpresentable Idea, whose presentation is precisely a failure to take from, that is, to be presented.

Fink argues (like Taruskin) that the modernist procedure of reifying the abstract form of the Ninth as "organic" and inevitable—in other words, the appeal to structural analysis—is literally an attempt to rewrite Beethoven's Ninth as Lyotard's modern sublime. Fink first sets out to show how McClary's rape image, shocking as it may be, is not particularly novel, but is rather a feminist perspective added to a long hermeneutic tradition of sublimating descriptions of the Ninth that predates high-modernist formalism. After recontextualizing McClary's reading, Fink argues that her rape image embodies the "aesthetics of failure" that is characteristic of Lyotard's second, postmodern moment of the sublime"—a negative presentation of the unpresentable.

Lyotard's version of the postmodern sublime is derived from Kant, who held that the sublime is experienced when a phenomenon's very inability to represent the transcendental Idea adequately is inscribed in the phenomenon itself—or, as Kant puts it,

> even if the Ideas of reason can be in no way adequately represented [in the sensuous-phenomenal world], they can be revived and evoked in the mind by means of this very inadequacy which can be presented in a sensuous way.[180]

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[180] Žižek, *The Sublime Object,* 203-04.

It is this successful presentation by means of failure, of the inadequacy itself, which presents the unpresentable: the place of the Idea is indicated through the very failure of its representation.

Žižek, however, recognizes an important philosophical twist in Hegel's response to the Kantian sublime that allows us to take a step beyond Fink's argument of the Ninth as postmodern sublime. Hegel's position is that there is nothing beyond the experience of the failure, beyond the field of representation. The experience of failure, of the radical inadequacy of all phenomena to the Idea, and of the radical fissure between the two (object *a* and Idea)—this experience is already Idea itself as 'pure', radical negativity. Whereas Kant and Lyotard think they are dealing only with a negative presentation of the Idea, Hegel is already in the midst of the Idea-in-itself; for this Idea-in-itself is nothing but this radical negativity. Therefore, the Kantian negative experience of the Idea must change into the experience of the Idea-in-itself as radical negativity.[181]

In Žižek's reading of Hegel's version of the sublime, the experience of the sublime remains the same. All we have to do is to subtract its transcendent presupposition—the presupposition that this experience indicates, in a negative way, some transcendent Idea-in-itself persisting in its positivity beyond it. In short, we must limit ourselves to what is strictly immanent to this experience, to pure negativity, to the negative self-relationship of representation.[182]

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[181] Ibid., 205-206.

[182] Ibid., 205-07.

According to Hegel, we overcome phenomenality (and achieve transcendence) not by reaching beyond it, but by attending to the experience that there is nothing beyond it—how its beyond is precisely the Nothing of absolute negativity. Thus, Žižek points out that the status of the sublime object is displaced almost imperceptibly, but nonetheless decisively: the sublime is no longer an empirical object indicating, through its very inadequacy, the dimension of a transcendent Idea-in-itself, but the experience of the struggle for the Idea, which is the very foundation on which the Idea itself is constructed.[183]

Take for example, the unpresentable, transcendental Idea of universal brotherhood and the attempt to present this phenomenon (either positively or negatively) in the Ninth. The modernist procedure would not be to present the transcendental Idea directly. Instead, it would seek to show how the form, how the "music itself," realizes universal brotherhood through the absence of a particular content. This absence could, then, be "filled" (or not) with the Idea of universal brotherhood, an idea whose expression can be linked, if the interpreter is clever enough, to the very absence of a specific content, which leaves it open to be filled by a universal one (Hatten).

The postmodern procedure, on the contrary, would be to present universal brotherhood negatively. It is not a missing content to be filled out by the interpretation. Rather, it is a negative presentation, that is, a failure to achieve the presentation of universal brotherhood. It does not, however, leave an absence to be filled in and so re-contained. Postmodernists revel in the

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[183] Ibid.

inconsistencies and failures of the Ninth, because in those very moments we experience the unpresentable Idea of universal brotherhood (Cook and Fink). The Hegelian twist would be to acknowledge that there is no abstract Idea of universal brotherhood that ex-sists outside of our experience of the Ninth.[184] The negative experiences of the Ninth's universal brotherhood (the failure of its form, its juxtapositions between styles, its raging rapist, its associations with Fascism) are themselves expressions of universal brotherhood: the experience of universal brotherhood is just this negative experience. In other words, universal brotherhood does not exist as a external positive, but only experienced through its expression of negative representation: it is not *known* but rather *experienced* as the gap between the Idea and the negative experience. Universal brotherhood can only be experienced *as the struggle for universal brotherhood*.

The sublime, negative presentation of universal brotherhood (for instance, Fascism) is not a negative limitation that causes the Idea (universal brotherhood) to fail to appear (the thought being that with this limitation removed we will finally be able to attain the Idea). Instead, the sublime Ninth is the positive condition of universal brotherhood, its very support. Either beautifying the Ninth or treating it merely as a negative presentation of the unpresentable sidesteps our *experience* of the struggle for universal brotherhood. The very idea of universal brotherhood thereby dissolves. The Ninth is not a signifier to some external, unattainable, transcendental Idea of universal brotherhood. Rather, the

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[184] Here then we must not only sacrifice our hopes of mastering and knowing the Ninth, but we must also sacrifice the Idea of universal brotherhood as an external positively existing phenomena that can be achieved.

Ninth *is* universal brotherhood, a performance of it, our means of experiencing (and performing) what we are not—that is, joined in universal brotherhood.

However, in order to avoid giving up on universal brotherhood and falling into a crisis because it does not exist, we must assume a kind of "active forgetfulness". We need to accept the symbolic fiction even though we know that in reality things are not like that. In other words, I know very well that universal brotherhood is not possible (that in reality it is only in the struggle for universal brotherhood that we experience universal brotherhood), but just the same, I act as if universal brotherhood were possible (otherwise, I would give into fatalism or cynicism). It is only through this *knowing*, but *acting as if*, that we can experience the struggle for universal brotherhood, rather than, the futile struggle for something that does not exist. In other words, we must take the stance of the performatism and the New Sincerity and choose the more enjoyable path—that universal brotherhood does exist—even though we know in reality that it does not; we must choose to construct the more pleasing story even though we know it to false. Only by taking this path do we finally achieve transcendence and get to know the Ninth.

I would like to conclude by returning to Kubrick's *A Clockwork Orange* to offer a second reading of the Ninth's role in the film with respect to the sublime notion of universal brotherhood. Recall that in Kubrick's film, the juxtaposition between Fascism and the Turkish march turned out to provide Alex's breakthrough during the Ludovico Treatment. Juxtapositions between the Ninth and violence, however, were nothing new to Alex. In fact, earlier in the film Alex had masturbated to the Ninth as several violent images were flashed across the

screen—he referred to this moment as "the perfect ending to a perfect day." What Alex objects to during the Ludovico Treatment is not the violence, but rather, to the serum-induced sickness.[185] Alex screams: "but it's not fair, it's not fair that I should feel ill when I hear lovely, lovely Ludwig van." In this way, Kubrick suggests that Alex was not missing a Superego, some Other, to tell him that violence is wrong; rather he lacked the very gap between the phenomenon and the Idea—that is, (according to Žižek's Hegelian twist) the Idea itself. We might say that in the Treatment, Alex experiences something like the *struggle* for universal brotherhood as a *sickness*. Alex did not experience this struggle prior to the Ludovico Treatment; the serum had to induce it.

After the serum, however, Alex only experienced the gap, the sickness, and he lacked the hope of ever achieving universal brotherhood (it being denied to him by the various figures who torture him and treat him as an outcast). Essentially, Alex now knows very well that universal brotherhood is impossible, but he is not yet able to assume a position where he can act as if it were possible. This change is finally brought about by his rehabilitation at the end of the film. When the Government Minister visits Alex, the Minister offers a bribe: "a good job on a good salary." When Alex agrees to the bribe and pledges to help the (fascist) government win the next election—thus, maintaining their control—the struggle for universal brotherhood is assumed. In other words, Alex knows very well (through his own experience) that universal brotherhood does not exist, but

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[185] In fact, there is little, if any, violence portrayed on the screen during this pivotal moment of the Ludovico Treatment, just images of Hitler inspecting his Nazi troops, Nazi paratroopers jumping out of airplanes, and tanks driving through fields.

by agreeing to help the fascist government, he is finally able to act as if it were. Once this gap is assumed, the government no longer controls Alex's enjoyment; Alex is again able to listen to the Ninth, able to have sexual and violent fantasies—once again free to enjoy! The fact that Alex stages his enjoyment in front of the Other during the final shot of the film is evidence that he *acts as if* his enjoyment were from the Other, even though he knows this Other no longer possesses his enjoyment (See Figure 6.2).

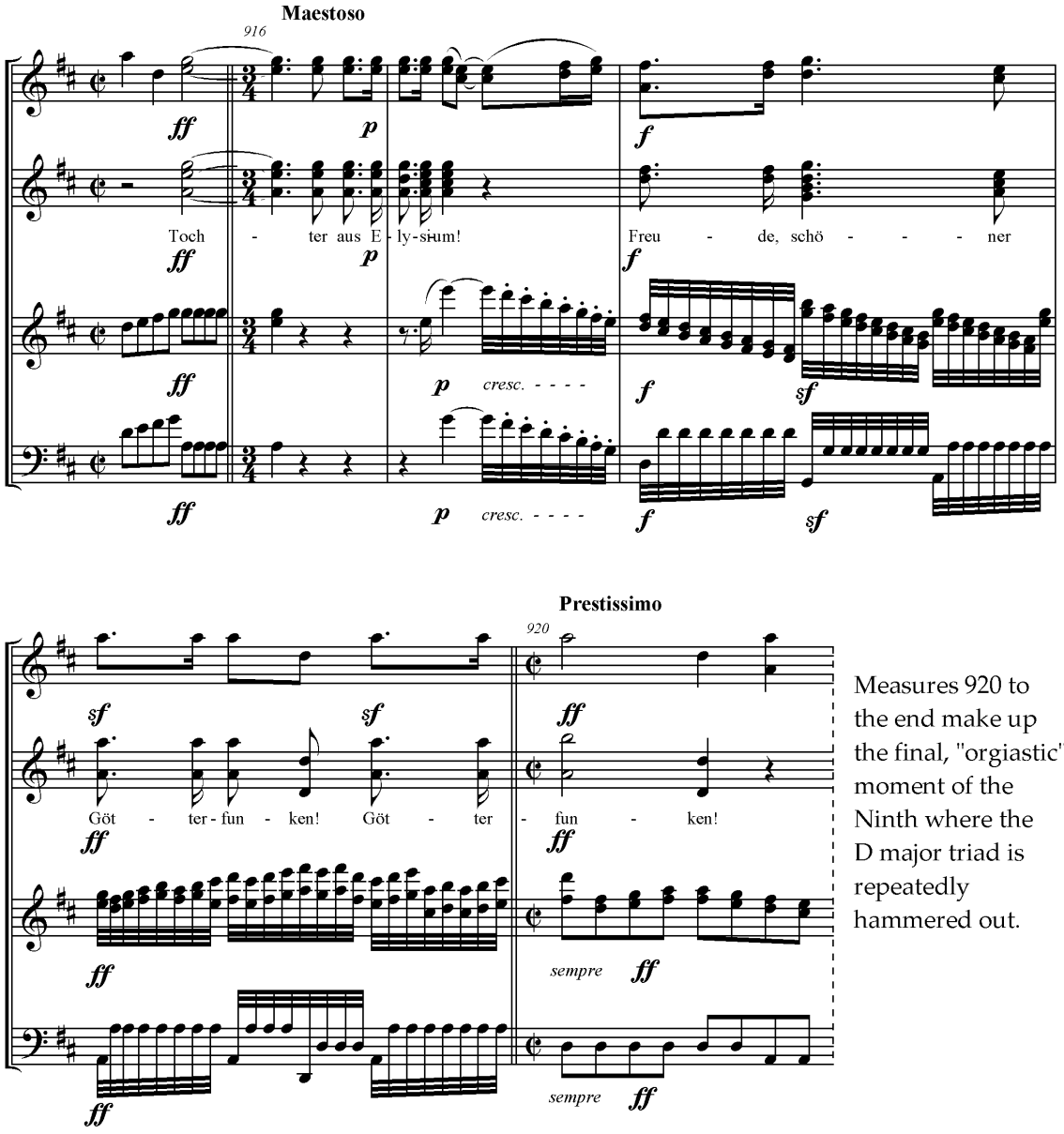
Figure 6.2: Alex, immediately after accepting the bribe from the Government Minister, is able once again, to listen to the Ninth and construct his own enjoyment.

What is the symphonic equivalent of this assuming of the gap between the transcendental Idea of universal brotherhood and its experience as the struggle? Where can we locate the locate the move from an identification with the Other, to

an identification with the Real of the drives. One possibility is measure 920 of the finale from the fourth movement of the Ninth, the descending perfect fifth (A-D) in all four vocal parts of the chorus. This is the fortissimo statement and following "orgiastic" outburst of joy that accompanies Alex's knowing but acting as if. What is interesting is how the shift from an identification with the Other to an identification with the Real of the drives is inscribed in the pitches themselves: A (Lacan's symbol for the Big Other, *Autre* is French for Other) and D (the Lacanian symbol for the drives.) This is the symphonic moment when we, like Alex, know very well that true, universal brotherhood does not exist, but are able to act as though it were possible, thus, freeing us up to enjoy on our own terms, to construct an *jouis-sens* without the Other (see Example 6.2).

If this reading is accepted, Phillips and Hill were correct in their conclusion that the end of the film does not celebrate the return of the evil Alex, but rather, laments the ultimate successful, fascistic process of turning an orange into a clockwork. What they fail to realize is that this is what the transcendental Idea, whether it be universal brotherhood, freedom, or joy, demands of us.[186]

[186] This is why it was so easy for Leonard Bernstein to switch out Joy for Freedom, he was simply trading one sublime, transcendental Idea for another: the fact that each can only be experience not as a positively ex-sisting Idea, but only as the struggle for each is what they have in common.



Measures 920 to the end make up the final, "orgiastic" moment of the Ninth where the D major triad is repeatedly hammered out.

Example 6.2: Beethoven's Ninth Symphony, fourth movement; the shift, from an identification with the Other, to an identification with the Real of the drives, is inscribed in the descending perfect fifth (A—D) in measure 920. This is the moment of *knowing* universal brotherhood is unattainable, but *acting as if* it were still possible, of constructing a *jouis-sens* without the Other.

Following Žižek's example of real democracy, we can see that far from indicating any kind of fatal flaw, the fundamental impasse of universal brotherhood is the very source of the Ninth's strength. We must take cognizance of the fact that the limit of universal brotherhood lies in its internal antagonisms, its inherent impossibility. We must give up our hopes of mastering the Ninth and realize that the uneasiness we experience through the Ninth—the failures in form, the incapability of "attaining release," the negative presentations of universal brotherhood (fascism)—are the very experience of our struggle for universal brotherhood, a struggle that will never end. Only, then, are we free to construct enjoyment on our terms, free from the Other. We must recognize this and in the same moment forget it; we must act as if joy, universal brotherhood, real democracy, and freedom were still possible, and we must engage the struggle that permits the experience, if not the realization.

As the Doctor tells Alex, we "must take our chance."

Will we?
"*Silencio*."

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